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THE PRELUDE



WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, 1770-1850.

From the engraving by G. J. Stodart, after Lupton's engraving
of the portrait by Haydon.

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Al. + P.*

The Prelude

Or, Growth of a Poet's Mind

An Autobiographical Poem

By

William Wordsworth

Selections Arranged and Edited by

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FRONTISPICE

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH. From the engraving by G. J. Stodart,
after Lupton's engraving of the portrait by Haydon.

INTRODUCTION

THE nature of *The Prelude* is indicated by its sub-title, "The Growth of a Poet's mind." The poem is a record of the author's life from childhood to early middle age. As Wordsworth had reached his poetic maturity at the period where the narrative ends, the poem is not an unfinished story: it has its distinct beginning, middle and end. It is the history of early promise, succeeded by disappointment, and ending in triumph. Yet, although *The Prelude* is complete in itself, its author's original intention was to make it but one part of a great work. The scheme was never finished. Wordsworth wrote *The Excursion*, a poem of about the same length as *The Prelude*, and some nine hundred lines of a work called *The Recluse*. Thus, of the great philosophical poem he had contemplated, only two complete books and a small portion of a third were written. But some of the greatest works of literature are only fragments of an original design; and although *The Prelude* is but one detail of an unfinished structure, it stands in the highest rank among the long poems of the nineteenth century. It has the varied interest of a great narrative sustained by passages frequently beautiful and even sublime. One of Wordsworth's peculiar achievements was to raise poetic autobiography into a region of universal interest. "The poet," he says, "is a man speaking to men"; and never are we allowed to lose sight of the human significance of his poetic progress.

How Nature moulded the mind of the poet in childhood; how disappointments, not selfish and personal, but generous and political, unsettled his mind; and how Nature acting through more kindly influences reawakened the creative impulse and made the poet master of his fate—such, in a few words, is the story of *The Prelude*. *Poeta nascitur non fit*: in one sense Wordsworth

INTRODUCTION

confirms this maxim : only he would say, I think, that the birth of the poet begins in early childhood. The crude popular notion of the poet as a heaven-sent genius, who owes nothing to birth, circumstances and condition, who lives apart from other boys and astonishes the world by his brilliance and precocity, is in every particular the very antithesis of Wordsworth's conception :

The child is father of the man,
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each in natural piety.

The poet is never weary of declaring his debt to Nature ; as if his genius were formed from accumulated impressions of beautiful scenes : Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
Fostered alike by beauty and by fear.

Of the infant prodigy who grows in wisdom under the eyes of admiring parents he speaks with indignation :

For this unnatural growth the trainer blame,
Pity the tree.

Where, then, it may be asked, are the signs of poetic genius ? The discerning reader of *The Prelude* will not be slow to find them. Ordinary as many of the incidents may seem, and characteristic of boyhood in general, they are at the same time extraordinary in the telling, and characteristic of Wordsworth in particular. The future genius of the poet will be found in the emotions arising from his experiences ; in the fear which dogged him as he returned from trapping birds (the captives of another's toil) :

I heard among the solitary hills
Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
Of undistinguishable motion, steps
Almost as silent as the turf they trod ;

in the awed wonder arising from the adventure on the lake,—

When, from behind that craggy steep till then
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,
As if with voluntary power instinct
Upreared its head ;

in his sense of Nature amid the excitement of skating :

The leafless trees, and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron ; while far distant hills
Into the tumult sent an alien sound
Of melancholy not unnoticed, while the stars
Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west
The orange sky of evening died away.

Consider these and similar descriptions and it will appear that while Wordsworth's experiences were such as might have befallen anyone, his genius lay in quickened sensibility, in deeper apprehension.

Wordsworth's childhood is often described as happy. It was happy in the sense that it provided an excellent preparation for his poetic future, but in many of its circumstances it was unfortunate. To be born in sight of the Lake Mountains, to be educated within a few miles of Windermere and Coniston, to enjoy such liberty at school that he could make innumerable excursions among the fells—all of these were circumstances highly favourable to the growth of the poet's mind. Wordsworth was also fortunate in his sister and brothers. Dorothy his sister, and two at least of his brothers, John and Christopher, had all, in varying degrees poetic interests and feelings. On the other hand, the boy lost both his parents before he was fourteen, and the relatives who then took charge of him, though conscientious, were scarcely sympathetic. Nor was Wordsworth's nature one which made happiness easy for him. His mother speaks of the anxiety which his future causes her; and others mention the "violence" of his feelings. Acts done in wilful defiance of authority are recorded. On one occasion he purposely ruined a picture of his aunt by "striking his whip through the old lady's hoop." In this wilfulness and impatience of control we see the northern love of independence, which was Wordsworth's in abundant measure. He possessed a strong and impassioned nature, and seemed, as his mother said, capable of achieving much in the world, whether good or evil.

On leaving the Grammar School at Hawkshead Wordsworth went to St. John's College, Cambridge. His impressions of the University are recorded in *The Prelude* with some fulness; but his academic life was of no great importance in the shaping of his mind. His attitude towards the University and its inmates is detached and somewhat aloof:

I was the Dreamer, they the Dream; I roamed
Delighted with the motley spectacle;
Gowns grave, or gaudy, doctors, students, streets,
Courts, cloisters, flocks of churches, gateways, towers!
Migration strange for a stripling of the hills,
A northern villager.

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But he was never content to look on life as a mere "spectacle," and hence it is not surprising that he should speak, a little further on, of

A strangeness of the mind,
A feeling that I was not for that hour,
Nor for that place.

While he was at Cambridge, however, an event was in preparation which was to have an influence on his mind scarcely less mighty than that of Nature herself. This was the French Revolution, the beginning of which is generally considered to be marked by the assembly of the States General at Versailles in May 1789. Wordsworth was born in 1770, and in 1790 he paid his memorable visit to France accompanied by a Cambridge friend, Robert Jones. Wordsworth was still an undergraduate and his prospects were uncertain. It was impossible that this journey through a beautiful foreign country, at a time when the most momentous revolution in history was in progress, should not make on his mind a deep and lasting impression. The French Revolution began in hope, and in the summer of 1790 the country was in an ecstasy of high anticipation. We chanced, he says,

To land at Calais on the very eve
Of that great federal day ; and there we saw,
In a mean city, and among a few,
How bright a face is worn when joy of one
Is joy for tens of millions.

The day after was the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille, and the Feast of the Federation was celebrated in Paris. Representatives assembled thither from every quarter of France. The poet's heart expanded in sympathy with the joy visible on every face :

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very Heaven.

Wherever the young men went they beheld the roads hung with garlands ; and night after night they joined in dances on the village greens. Everything that was generous in Wordsworth responded to the universal signs of jubilation, and with all the ardour of his enthusiastic nature he embraced the cause of human liberty.

During part of 1791 and nearly the whole of 1792 Wordsworth was again in France, observing, reading, conversing and deepening

his political opinions. He formed a close friendship with a remarkable man, Michel Beaupuy, a French officer of thirty-seven. Although France was a monarchy until the latter part of 1792 this man was a Republican. His character was singularly elevated. The noble qualities and the maturity of his mind completely dominated the young poet, and their conversations enabled him to form his vague enthusiasms into something like a coherent system. The time spent by Wordsworth in the society of Beaupuy was short, but the influence of their friendship was enduring. The visits to France had made an epoch in the poet's mind. It was impossible for him, ever after, to be limited to narrow or personal interests ; his hopes and his views were extended so as to embrace the welfare of all mankind.

But the high hopes awakened by the Revolution in many of the best minds of the time were not to be fulfilled. Liberty, far from extending over the whole earth, seemed to desert the very land of her nativity. The poet had left France in the December of 1792, and the year which followed was one of ever deepening gloom. The old generous ideals seemed to be all abandoned. Innocent men, famous and obscure, perished on the scaffold. In 1794 came the dictatorship of Robespierre and the Reign of Terror. But before this tragic climax, a blow scarcely less cruel to the poet's aspirations had been dealt by his own country. While Wordsworth still clung to his loyalty towards France, England declared war upon her. Forsaken by the land of his birth, and hardly able to contemplate the home of his political hopes, the poet almost abandoned himself to despair.

Wordsworth was not suffering from a merely political disappointment. On the Revolution in France he had staked his hopes for *human nature* ; and the destruction of these hopes plunged him into moral scepticism. All healthy activity was paralysed, for nothing could be regarded as certain :

So I fared,
Dragging all precepts, judgments, maxims, creeds,
Like culprits to the bar ; calling the mind,
Suspiciously, to establish in plain day
Her titles and her honours ; now believing,
Now disbelieving ; endlessly perplexed
With impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground
Of obligation, what the rule and whence

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The sanction ; till, demanding formal *proof*,
And seeking it in everything, I lost
All feeling of conviction, and, in fine,
Sick, wearied out with contrarieties,
Yielded up moral questions in despair.

The lines quoted occur in the eleventh book of *The Prelude*. The remaining three books describe the poet's restoration to imaginative health. To the morbid and barren activity caused by disappointed hopes succeeded a period in which the mood of "calm passiveness" described in the poet's own lines, though not indeed perpetual, was at least frequently recurrent :

The eye it cannot choose but see,
We cannot bid the ear be still ;
Our bodies feel where'er they be,
Against, or with our will.

Nor less I deem that there are powers,
Which of themselves our minds impress,
That we can feed this mind of ours,
In a wise passiveness.

Here is a description of the senses in a state of healthy receptivity, of the inward ear attentive to the voice of Nature—in a word, of the poet's creative mood. How did this recovery come about ?

Wordsworth returned from France with his future as undecided as ever. His uncles regarded him with great disfavour ; the time seemed at hand when he would be forced by want to enter upon some regular occupation. There was, however, a piece of great good fortune in store for him. He had acted for a short time as tutor to a young man named Raisley Calvert, who was an invalid. Calvert had discerned Wordsworth's genius and understood his need for leisure. He knew that he could not live long himself and left the poet a legacy of £900. The money came at a most opportune moment, and it enabled Wordsworth to realise one of his dearest ambitions, to set up house with his sister Dorothy. The two lived first for a short time at Racedown, in Dorsetshire, then at Alfoxden near the Quantock Hills, where they saw a great deal of Coleridge, and lastly at Dove Cottage, Grasmere, where they remained for several years. Circumstances had at length become kind, and Wordsworth had no serious anxiety about money for the rest of his life.

There is no need to trace in detail the stages of Wordsworth's

poetic progress from the time when he settled at Racedown : that story is told by the poet himself in the last three books of *The Prelude*. It must not be supposed that he had now reached a final haven of rest, and was never again troubled by the storms of life. Political anxieties and the national peril during the Napoleonic wars prevented that. But his spiritual resources could now secure him from outward disappointment. The "soul" of his "moral being," to quote his own words, was Nature. How the love of Nature grew so as to inform the whole of the poet's view of life can only be realised by a careful study of his work. One must, however, mention his debt to the two great friends of this period, Dorothy Wordsworth and Coleridge. By his sister's influence, companionship and encouragement he was enabled to link up his imagination with those early days when the " sounding cataract " had " haunted him like a passion " ; and he came to regard this continuity of feeling as supremely important in the man's, or at least, the poet's life :

My heart leaps up when I behold
 A rainbow in the sky :
 So was it when my life began ;
 So is it now I am a man ;
 So be it when I shall grow old,
 Or let me die !

Of Wordsworth's debt to Coleridge it is needless to say more than that at this time no man of enthusiastic nature came into contact with that marvellous mind without a sense of admiration bordering upon awe. Coleridge completed the work of Beaupuy. He saved Wordsworth's somewhat brooding mind from being too much engrossed by itself, and strengthened that tendency to philosophic meditation which is one of its main characteristics. *The Prelude* is addressed to Coleridge and was read to him by Wordsworth ; and no lover of the poem or its author should neglect to read the lines written by Coleridge on this occasion, opening with the apostrophe :

Friend of the wise ! and teacher of the good !

What Coleridge leaves unsaid in this poem he has expressed in what is perhaps the most illuminating work of criticism ever produced by an English author, the *Biographia Literaria*.

THE PRELUDE

BOOK I.—CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOL-TIME.

Early Recollections.

(ll. 301-503.)

Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
Fostered alike by beauty and fear :
Much favoured in my birthplace, and no less
In that belovèd Vale to which ere long
We were transplanted—there were we let loose
For sports of wider range. Ere I had told
Ten birth-days, when among the mountain-slopes
Frost, and the breath of frosty wind, had snapped
The last autumnal crocus, 'twas my joy
With store of springes o'er my shoulder hung 10
To range the open heights where woodcocks run
Among the smooth green turf. Through half the night,
Scudding away from snare to snare, I plied
That anxious visitation ;—moon and stars
Were shining o'er my head. I was alone,
And seemed to be a trouble to the peace
That dwelt among them. Sometimes it befell
In these night wanderings, that a strong desire
O'erpowered my better reason, and the bird
Which was the captive of another's toil 20
Became my prey ; and when the deed was done
I heard among the solitary hills

Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
 Of undistinguishable motion, steps
 Almost as silent as the turf they trod.

Nor less when spring had warmed the cultured Vale,
 Moved we as plunderers where the mother-bird
 Had in high places built her lodge ; though mean
 Our object and inglorious, yet the end
 Was not ignoble. Oh ! when I have hung 30
 Above the raven's nest, by knots of grass
 And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock
 But ill sustained, and almost (so it seemed)
 Suspended by the blast that blew amain,
 Shouldering the naked crag, oh, at that time
 While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,
 With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind
 Blow through my ear ! the sky seemed not a sky
 Of earth—and with what motion moved the clouds !

Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows 40
 Like harmony in music ; there is a dark
 Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles
 Discordant elements, makes them cling together
 In one society. How strange that all
 The terrors, pains, and early miseries,
 Regrets, vexations, lassitudes interfused
 Within my mind, should e'er have borne a part,
 And that a needful part, in making up
 The calm existence that is mine when I
 Am worthy of myself ! Praise to the end ! 50
 Thanks to the means which Nature deigned to employ ;
 Whether her fearless visitings, or those
 That came with soft alarm, like hurtless light
 Opening the peaceful clouds ; or she may use
 Severer interventions, ministry
 More palpable, as best might suit her aim.

One summer evening (led by her) I found
A little boat tied to a willow tree
Within a rocky cave, its usual home.
Straight I unloosed her chain, and stepping in
Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth
And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice
Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on ;
Leaving behind her still, on either side,
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,
Until they melted all into one track
Of sparkling light. But now, like one who rows,
Proud of his skill, to reach a chosen point
With an unswerving line, I fixed my view
Upon the summit of a craggy ridge,
The horizon's utmost boundary ; far above
Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.
She was an elfin pinnace ; Justily
I dipped my oars into the silent lake,
And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat
Went heaving through the water like a swan ;
When, from behind that craggy steep till then
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,
As if with voluntary power instinct
Upreared its head. I struck and struck again,
And growing still in stature the grim shape
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
And measured motion like a living thing,
Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,
And through the silent water stole my way
Back to the covert of the willow tree ;
There in her mooring-place I left my bark,—
And through the meadows homeward went, in grave
And serious mood ; but after I had seen
That spectacle, for many days, my brain
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense

60

70

80

90

Of unknown modes of being ; o'er my thoughts
 There hung a darkness, call it solitude
 Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes
 Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
 Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields
 But huge and mighty forms, that do not live
 Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
 By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.

100

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe !
 Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought
 That givest to forms and images a breath
 And everlasting motion, not in vain
 By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
 Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
 The passions that build up our human soul ;
 Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
 But with high objects, with enduring things—
 With life and nature—purifying thus
 The elements of feeling and of thought,
 And sanctifying, by such discipline,
 Both pain and fear, until we recognise
 A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.
 Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me
 With stinted kindness. In November days,
 When vapours rolling down the valley made
 A lonely scene more lonesome, among woods,
 At noon and 'mid the calm of summer nights,
 When, by the margin of the trembling lake,
 Beneath the gloomy hills homeward I went
 In solitude, such intercourse was mine ;
 Mine was it in the fields both day and night,
 And by the waters, all the summer long.

110

120

And in the frosty season, when the sun

Was set, and visible for many a mile
 The cottage windows blazed through twilight gloom.

I heeded not their summons : happy time

It was indeed for all of us—for me

It was a time of rapture ! Clear and loud

130

The village clock tolled six,—I wheeled about

Proud and exulting like an untired horse

That cares not for his home. All shod with steel,

We hissed along the polished ice in games

Confederate, imitative of the chase

And woodland pleasures,—the resounding horn,

The pack loud chiming, and the hunted hare.

So through the darkness and the cold we flew,

And not a voice was idle ; with the din

Smitten, the precipices rang aloud ;

140

The leafless trees and every icy crag

Tinkled like iron ; while far distant hills

Into the tumult sent an alien sound

Of melancholy not unnoticed, while the stars

Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west

The orange sky of evening died away.

Not seldom from the uproar I retired

Into a silent bay, or sportively

Glanced sideway, leaving the tumultuous throng,

To cut across the reflex of a star

150

That fled, and, flying still before me, gleamed

Upon the glassy plain ; and oftentimes,

When we had given our bodies to the wind,

And all the shadowy banks on either side

Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still

The rapid line of motion, then at once

Have I, reclining back upon my heels,

Stopped short ; yet still the solitary cliffs

Wheeled by me—even as if the earth had rolled

With visible motion her diurnal round !

160

Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,

Feebler and feeble, and I stood and watched
Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep.

Ye Presences of Nature in the sky
And on the earth ! Ye Visions of the hills !
And Souls of lonely places ! can I think
A vulgar hope was yours when ye employed
Such ministry, when ye through many a year
Haunting me thus among my boyish sports,
On caves and trees, upon the woods and hills,
Impressed upon all forms the characters
Of danger or desire ; and thus did make
The surface of the universal earth
With triumph and delight, with hope and fear,
Work like a sea ?

170

Not uselessly employed,
Might I pursue this theme through every change
Of exercise and play, to which the year
Did summon us in his delightful round.

180

We were a noisy crew ; the sun in heaven
Beheld not vales more beautiful than ours ;
Nor saw a band in happiness and joy
Richer, or worthier of the ground they trod.
I could record with no reluctant voice
The woods of autumn, and their hazel bowers
With milk-white clusters hung ; the rod and line,
True symbol of hope's foolishness, whose strong
And unreproved enchantment led us on
By rocks and pools shut out from every star,
All the green summer, to forlorn cascades
Among the windings hid of mountain brooks.
—Unfading recollections ! at this hour
The heart is almost mine with which I felt,
From some hill-top on sunny afternoons,
The paper kite high among fleecy clouds

190

Pull at her rein like an impetuous courser ;
 Or, from the meadows sent on gusty days,
 Beheld her breast the wind, then suddenly
 Dashed headlong, and rejected by the storm.

Ye lowly cottages wherein we dwelt,
 A ministration of your own was yours :
 Can I forget you, being as you were
 So beautiful among the pleasant fields
 In which ye stood ? or can I here forget
 The plain and seemly countenance with which
 Ye dealt out your plain comforts ? Yet had ye
 Delights and exaltations of your own.

200

Eager and never weary we pursued
 Our home-amusements by the warm peat-fire
 At evening, when with pencil, and smooth slate
 In square divisions parcelled out and all
 With crosses and with cyphers scribbled o'er,
 We schemed and puzzled, head opposed to head
 In strife too humble to be named in verse :
 Or round the naked table, snow-white deal,
 Cherry or maple, sate in close array,
 And to the combat, Loo or Whist, led on
 A thick-ribbed army ; not, as in the world,
 Neglected and ungratefully thrown by
 Even for the very service they had wrought,
 But husbanded through many a long campaign.

210

Uncouth assemblage was it, where no few
 Had changed their functions ; some, plebeian cards
 Which Fate, beyond the promise of their birth,
 Had dignified, and called to represent
 The persons of departed potentates.

220

Oh, with what echoes on the board they fell !
 Ironic diamonds,—clubs, hearts, diamonds, spades,
 A congregation piteously akin !
 Chief matter offered they to boyish wit,

Those sooty knaves, precipitated down
 With scoffs and taunts, like Vulcan out of heaven :
 The paramount ace, a moon in her eclipse,
 Queens gleaming through their splendour's last decay,
 And monarchs surly at the wrongs sustained
 By royal visages. Meanwhile abroad
 Incessant rain was falling, or the frost
 Raged bitterly, with keen and silent tooth ;
 And, interrupting oft that eager game,
 From under Esthwaite's splitting fields of ice
 The pent-up air, struggling to free itself,
 Gave out to meadow-grounds and hills a loud
 Protracted yelling, like the noise of wolves
 Howling in troops along the Bothnic Main.

240

BOOK II.—SCHOOL-TIME.

Holiday Delights.

(ll. 47-77.)

We ran a boisterous course ; the year span round
 With giddy motion. But the time approached
 That brought with it a regular desire
 For calmer pleasures, when the winning forms
 Of Nature were collaterally attached
 To every scheme of holiday delight
 And every boyish sport, less grateful else
 And languidly pursued.

When summer came,

Our pastime was, on bright half-holidays,
 To sweep along the plain of Windermere
 With rival oars ; and the selected bourne
 Was now an Island musical with birds
 That sang and ceased not ; now a Sister Isle

10

Beneath the oaks' umbrageous covert, sown
 With lilies of the valley like a field ;
 And now a third small Island, where survived
 In solitude the ruins of a shrine
 Once to Our Lady dedicate, and served
 Daily with chaunted rites. In such a race
 So ended, disappointment could be none,
 Uneasiness, or pain, or jealousy :
 We rested in the shade, all pleased alike,
 Conquered and conqueror. Thus the pride of strength,
 And the vain-glory of superior skill,
 Were tempered ; thus was gradually produced
 A quiet independence of the heart ;
 And to my Friend who knows me I may add,
 Fearless of blame, that hence for future days
 Ensued a diffidence and modesty,
 || And I was taught to feel, perhaps too much,
 The self-sufficing power of Solitude.

20

30

The Return from an Expedition.

(ll. 115-137.)

Our steeds remounted and the summons given,
 With whip and spur we through the chauntry flew
 In uncouth race, and left the cross-legged knight,
 And the stone-abbot, and that single wren
 Which one day sang so sweetly in the nave.
 Of the old church, that—though from recent showers
 The earth was comfortless, and, touched by faint
 Internal breezes, sobbings of the place
 And respirations, from the roofless walls
 The shuddering ivy dripped large drops—yet still
 So sweetly 'mid the gloom the invisible bird
 Sang to herself, that there I could have made
 My dwelling-place, and lived for ever there

10

To hear such music. Through the walls we flew
 And down the valley, and, a circuit made
 In wantonness of heart, through rough and smooth
 We scampered homewards. Oh, ye rocks and streams,
 And that still spirit shed from evening air !
 Even in this joyous time I sometimes felt
 Your presence, when with slackened step we breathed 20
 Along the sides of the steep hills, or when
 Lighted by gleams of moonlight from the sea
 We beat with thundering hoofs the level sand.

Inspiration from Nature.

(ll. 396-471.)

Thus while the days flew by, and years passed on,
 From Nature and her overflowing soul 1
 I had received so much, that all my thoughts
 Were steeped in feeling ; I was only then
 Contented, when with bliss ineffable
 I felt the sentiment of Being spread
 O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still ;
 O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
 And human knowledge, to the human eye
 Invisible, yet liveth to the heart ; 10
 O'er all that leaps and runs, and shouts and sings,
 Or beats the gladsome air ; o'er all that glides
 Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself,
 And mighty depth of waters. Wonder not
 If high the transport, great the joy I felt,
 Communing in this sort through earth and heaven
 With every form of creature, as it looked
 Towards the Uncreated with a countenance
 Of adoration, with an eye of love.
 One song they sang, and it was audible,
 Most audible, then, when the fleshly ear 20

O'ercome by humblest prelude of that strain
 Forgot her functions, and slept undisturbed.

If this be error, and another faith
 Find easier access to the pious mind,
 Yet were I grossly destitute of all
 Those human sentiments that make this earth
 So dear, if I should fail with grateful voice
 To speak of you, ye mountains, and ye lakes
 And sounding cataracts, ye mists and winds
 That dwell among the hills where I was born.
 If in my youth I have been pure in heart,
 If, mingling with the world, I am content
 With my own modest pleasures, and have lived
 With God and Nature communing, removed
 From little enmities and low desires,
The gift is yours; if in these times of fear
 This melancholy waste of hopes o'erthrown.
 If, 'mid indifference and apathy,
 And wicked exultation when good men
 On every side fall off, we know not how
 To selfishness, disguised in gentle names
 Of peace and quiet and domestic love,
 Yet mingled not unwillingly with sneers
 On visionary minds; if, in this time
 Of dereliction and dismay, I yet
 Despair not of our nature, but retain
 A more than Roman confidence, a faith
 That fails not, in all sorrow my support,
 The blessing of my life; the gift is yours,
 Ye winds and sounding cataracts! 'tis yours,
 Ye mountains! thine, O Nature! Thou hast rei
 My lofty speculations; and in thee,
 For this uneasy heart of ours, I find
 A never-failing principle of joy
 And purest passion.

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Thou, my Friend ! wert reared
 In the great city, 'mid far other scenes ;
 But we, by different roads, at length have gained
 The self-same bourne. And for this cause to thee
 I speak, unapprehensive of contempt,
 The insinuated scoff of coward tongues,
 And all that silent language which so oft
 In conversation between man and man
 Blots from the human countenance all trace
 Of beauty and of love. For thou hast sought
 The truth in solitude, and, since the days
 That gave thee liberty, full long desired,
 To serve in Nature's temple, thou hast been
 The most assiduous of her ministers ;
 In many things my brother, chiefly here
 In this our deep devotion.

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Fare thee well !

Health and the quiet of a healthful mind
 Attend thee ! seeking oft the haunts of men,
 And yet more often living with thyself,
 And for thyself, so haply shall thy days
 Be many, and a blessing to mankind.

BOOK III.—RESIDENCE AT CAMBRIDGE.

The poet's first impressions of the University.

(ll. 1-82.)

It was a dreary morning when the wheels
 Rolled over a wide plain o'erhung with clouds,
 And nothing cheered our way till first we saw
 The long-roofed chapel of King's College lift
 Turrets and pinnacles in answering files,
 Extended high above a dusky grove.

Advancing, we espied upon the road
 A student clothed in gown and tasselled cap,
Striding along as if o'ertasked by Time,
 Or covetous of exercise and air ;
 He passed—nor was I master of my eyes
 Till he was left an arrow's flight behind.
 As near and nearer to the spot we drew,
 It seemed to suck us in with an eddy's force.
 Onward we drove beneath the Castle ; caught,
 While crossing Magdalene Bridge, a glimpse of Cam :
 And at the *Hoop* alighted, famous Inn.

My spirit was up, my thoughts were full of hope ;
 Some friends I had, acquaintances who there
 Seemed friends, poor simple schoolboys, now hung round
 With honour and importance : in a world
 Of welcome faces up and down I roved ;
 Questions, directions, warnings and advice,
 Flowed in upon me, from all sides ; fresh day
 Of pride and pleasure ! to myself I seemed
 A man of business and expense, and went
 From shop to shop about my own affairs,
 To Tutor or to Tailor, as befell,
 From street to street with loose and careless mind.

I was the Dreamer, they the Dream ; I roamed
 Delighted through the motley spectacle ;
 Gowns grave, or gaudy, doctors, students, streets
 Courts, cloisters, flocks of churches, gateways, towers :
 Migration strange for a stripling of the hills,
 A northern villager.

As if the change

Had waited on some Fairy's wand, at once
 Behold me rich in monies, and attired
 In splendid garb, with hose of silk, and hair
 Powdered like rimey trees, when frost is keen.

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My lordly dressing-gown, I pass it by,
With other signs of manhood that supplied
The lack of beard.—The weeks went roundly on,
With invitations, suppers, wine and fruit,
Smooth housekeeping within, and all without
Liberal, and suiting gentleman's array.

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The Evangelist St. John my patron was :
Three Gothic courts are his, and in the first
Was my abiding-place, a nook obscure ;
Right underneath, the College kitchens made
A humming sound, less tuneable than bees,
But hardly less industrious ; with shrill notes
Of sharp command and scolding intermixed.
Near me hung Trinity's loquacious clock,
Who never let the quarters, night or day,
Slip by him unproclaimed, and told the hours
Twice over with a male and female voice.
Her pealing organ was my neighbour too ;
And from my pillow, looking forth by light
Of moon or favouring stars, I could behold
The antechapel where the statue stood
Of Newton with his prism and silent face,
The marble index of a mind for ever
Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone.

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Of College labours, of the Lecturer's room
All studded round, as thick as chairs could stand,
With loyal students faithful to their books,
Half-and-half idlers, hardy recusants,
And honest dunces—of important days,
Examinations, when the man was weighed
As in a balance ! of excessive hopes,
Tremblings withal and commendable fears,
Small jealousies, and triumphs good or bad—
Let others that know more speak as they know.

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Such glory was but little sought by me,
 And little won. Yet from the first crude days
 Of settling time in this untried abode,
 I was disturbed at times by prudent thoughts,
 Wishing to hope without a hope, some fears
 About my future worldly maintenance,
 And, more than all, a strangeness in the mind,
 A feeling that I was not for that hour,
 Nor for that place.

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Inspiration from the “garden of great intellects.” A confession.

(ll. 256-321.)

Such was the tenour of the second act
 In this new life. Imagination slept,
 And yet not utterly. I could not print
 Ground where the grass had yielded to the steps
 Of generations of illustrious men,
 Unmoved. I could not always lightly pass
 Through the same gateways, sleep where they had slept,
 Wake where they waked, range that inclosure old,
 That garden of great intellects, undisturbed.
 Place also by the side of this dark sense
 Of noble feeling, that those spiritual men,
 Even the great Newton's own ethereal self,
 Seemed humbled in these precincts thence to be
 The more endeared. Their several memories here
 (Even like their persons in their portraits clothed
 With the accustomed garb of daily life)
 Put on a lowly and a touching grace
 Of more distinct humanity, that left
 All genuine admiration unimpaired.

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Beside the pleasant Mill of Trompington
 I laughed with Chaucer in the hawthorn shade;

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Heard him, while birds were warbling, tell his tales
 Of amorous passion. And that gentle Bard,
 Chosen by the Muses for their Page of State—
 Sweet Spenser, moving through his clouded heaven
 With the moon's beauty and the moon's soft pace,
 I called him Brother, Englishman, and Friend !

Yea, our blind Poet, who, in his later day,
 Stood almost single ; uttering odious truth—
 Darkness before, and danger's voice behind,
 Soul awful—if the earth has ever lodged
 An awful soul—I seemed to see him here
 Familiarly, and in his scholar's dress
 Bounding before me, yet a stripling youth—
 A boy, no better, with his rosy cheeks
 Angelical, keen eye, courageous look,
 And conscious step of purity and pride.

Among the band of my compeers was one
 Whom chance had stationed in the very room
 Honoured by Milton's name. O temperate Bard :

Be it confessed that, for the first time, seated
 Within thy innocent lodge and oratory,

One of a festive circle, I poured out
 Libations, to thy memory drank, till pride

And gratitude grew dizzy in a brain
 Never excited by the fumes of wine

Before that hour, or since. Then, forth I ran
 From the assembly ; through a length of streets,
 Ran, ostrich-like, to reach our chapel door

In not a desperate or opprobrious time,

Albeit long after the importunate bell

Had stopped, with wearisome Cassandra voice
 No longer haunting the dark winter night.

Call back, O Friend ! a moment to thy mind,
 The place itself and fashion of the rites.

With careless ostentation shouldering up

My surplice, through the inferior throng I clove

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Of the plain Burghers, who in audience stood
 On the last skirts of their permitted ground,
 Under the pealing organ. Empty thoughts !
 I am ashamed of them : and that great Bard,
 And thou, O Friend ! who in thy ample mind
 Hast placed me high above my best deserts,
 Ye will forgive the weakness of that hour,
 In some of its unworthy vanities,
 Brother to many more.

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The great days of the University.

(ll. 446-478.)

Different sight

Those venerable Doctors saw of old,
 When all who dwelt within these famous walls
 Led in abstemiousness a studious life ;
 When, in forlorn and naked chambers cooped
 And crowded, o'er the ponderous books they hung
 Like caterpillars eating out their way
 In silence, or with keen devouring noise
 Not to be tracked or fathered. Princes then
 At matins froze, and couched at curfew-time,
 Trained up through piety and zeal to prize
 Spare diet, patient labour, and plain weeds.
 O seat of Arts ! renowned throughout the world !
 Far different service in those homely days
 The Muses' modest nurslings underwent
 From their first childhood : in that glorious time
 When Learning, like a stranger come from far,
 Sounding through Christian lands her trumpet, roused
 Peasant and king ; when boys and youths, the growth
 Of ragged villages and crazy huts,
 Forsook their homes, and, errant in the quest
 Of Patron, famous school or friendly nook,
 Where, pensioned, they in shelter might sit down,

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From town to town and through wide scattered realms
 Journeyed with ponderous folios in their hands ;
 And often, starting from some covert place,
 Saluted the chance comer on the road,
 Crying, “ An obolus, a penny give
 To a poor scholar ! ”—when illustrious men,
 Lovers of truth, by penury constrained,
 Bucer, Erasmus, or Melancthon, read
 Before the doors or windows of their cells
 By moonshine through mere lack of taper light.

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BOOK IV.—SUMMER VACATION.

A memorable morning.

(ll. 256-338.)

As one who hangs down-bending from the side
 Of a slow-moving boat, upon the breast
 Of a still water, solacing himself
 With such discoveries as his eye can make
 Beneath him in the bottom of the deep,
 Sees many beauteous sights—weeds, fishes, flowers,
 Grots, pebbles, roots of trees, and fancies more,
 Yet often is perplexed and cannot part
 The shadow from the substance, rocks and sky,
 Mountains and clouds, reflected in the depth
 Of the clear flood, from things which there abide
 In their true dwelling ; now is crossed by gleam
 Of his own image, by a sunbeam now,
 And wavering motions sent he knows not whence,
 Impediments that make his task more sweet ;
 Such pleasant office have we long pursued
 Incumbent o'er the surface of past time
 With like success, nor often have appeared

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Shapes fairer or less doubtfully discerned
 Than these to which the Tale, indulgent Friend ! 20
 Would now direct thy notice. Yet in spite
 Of pleasure won, and knowledge not withheld,
 There was an inner falling off—I loved,
 Loved deeply all that had been loved before,
 More deeply even than ever : but a swarm
 Of heady schemes jostling each other, gawds,
 And feast and dance, and public revelry,
 And sports and games (too grateful in themselves,
 Yet in themselves less grateful, I believe,
 Than as they were a badge glossy and fresh 30
 Of manliness and freedom) all conspired
 To lure my mind from firm habitual quest
 Of feeding pleasures, to depress the zeal
 And damp those yearnings which had once been mine—
 A wild, unworldly-minded youth, given up
 To his own eager thoughts. It would demand
 Some skill, and longer time than may be spared,
 To paint these vanities, and how they wrought
 In haunts where they, till now, had been unknown.
 It seemed the very garments that I wore 40
 Preyed on my strength, and stopped the quiet stream
 Of self-forgetfulness.

Yes, that heartless chase
 Of trivial pleasures was a poor exchange
 For books and nature at that early age.
 'Tis true, some casual knowledge might be gained
 Of character or life ; but at that time,
 Of manners put to school I took small note,
 And all my deeper passions lay elsewhere.
 Far better had it been to exalt the mind
 By solitary study, to uphold 50
 Intense desire through meditative peace ;
 And yet, for chastisement of these regrets,
 The memory of one particular hour

Doth here rise up against me. 'Mid a throng
 Of maids and youths, old men, and matrons staid,
 A medley of all tempers, I had passed
 The night in dancing, gaiety, and mirth,
 With din of instruments and shuffling feet,
 And glancing forms, and tapers glittering,
 And unaimed prattle flying up and down ;
 Spirits upon the stretch, and here and there
 Slight shocks of young love-loving interspersed,
 Whose transient pleasure mounted to the head,
 And tingled through the veins. Ere we retired,
 The cock had crowed, and now the eastern sky
 Was kindling, not unseen, from humble copse
 And open field, through which the pathway wound,
 And homeward led my steps. Magnificent
 The morning rose, in memorable pomp,
 Glorious as e'er I had beheld—in front,
 The sea lay laughing at a distance ; near,
 The solid mountains shone, bright as the clouds,
 Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light ;
 And in the meadows and the lower grounds
 Was all the sweetness of a common dawn—
 Dews, vapours, and the melody of birds,
 And labourers going forth to till the fields.
 Ah ! need I say, dear Friend ! that to the brim
 My heart was full ; I made no vows, but vows
 Were then made for me ; bond unknown to me
 Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
 A dedicated Spirit. On I walked
 In thankful blessedness, which yet survives.

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Solitude invests the experiences of life with sublimity.

(ll. 354-469.)

When from our better selves we have too long
 Been parted by the hurrying world, and droop,

Sick of its business, of its pleasures tired,
 How gracious, how benign, is Solitude ;
 How potent a mere image of her sway ;
 Most potent when impressed upon the mind
 With an appropriate human centre—hermit,
 Deep in the bosom of the wilderness ;
 Votary (in vast cathedral, where no foot
 Is treading, where no other face is seen) 10
 Kneeling at prayers ; or watchman on the top
 Of lighthouse, beaten by Atlantic waves ;
 Or as the soul of that great Power is met
 Sometimes embodied on a public road,
 When, for the night deserted, it assumes
 A character of quiet more profound
 Than pathless wastes.

Once, when those summer months

Were flown, and autumn brought its annual show
 Of oars with oars contending, sails with sails,
 Upon Winander's spacious breast, it chanced 20
 That—after I had left a flower-decked room
 (Whose in-door pastime, lighted up, survived
 To a late hour), and spirits overwrought
 Were making night do penance for a day
 Spent in a round of strenuous idleness—
 My homeward course led up a long ascent,
 Where the road's watery surface, to the top
 Of that sharp rising, glittered to the moon
 And bore the semblance of another stream
 Stealing with silent lapse to join the brook 30
 That murmured in the vale. All else was still ;
 No living thing appeared in earth or air,
 And, save the flowing water's peaceful voice,
 Sound there was none—but, lo ! an uncouth shape,
 Shown by a sudden turning of the road,
 So near that, slipping back into the shade
 Of a thick hawthorn, I could mark him well,

Myself unseen. He was of stature tall,
A span above man's common measure, tall,
Stiff, lank, and upright ; a more meagre man
Was never seen before by night or day.

Long were his arms, pallid his hands ; his mouth
Looked ghastly in the moonlight : from behind,
A mile-stone propped him ; I could also ken
That he was clothed in military garb,
Though faded, yet entire. Companionless,
No dog attending, by no staff sustained,
He stood, and in his very dress appeared
A desolation, a simplicity,

To which the trappings of a gaudy world
Make a strange back-ground. From his lips, ere long,

Issued low muttered sounds, as if of pain

Or some uneasy thought ; yet still his form

Kept the same awful steadiness—at his feet

His shadow lay, and moved not. From self-blame

Not wholly free, I watched him thus ; at length

Subduing my heart's specious cowardice,

I left the shady nook where I had stood

And hailed him. Slowly from his resting-place

He rose, and with a lean and wasted arm

In measured gesture lifted to his head

Returned my salutation ; then resumed

His station as before ; and when I asked

His history, the veteran, in reply,

Was neither slow nor eager ; but, unmoved,

And with a quiet uncomplaining voice,

A stately air of mild indifference,

He told in few plain words a soldier's tale—

That in the Tropic Islands he had served,

Whence he had landed scarcely three weeks past ;

That on his landing he had been dismissed,

And now was travelling towards his native home.

This heard, I said, in pity, " Come with me."

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He stooped, and straightway from the ground took up
An oaken staff by me yet unobserved—

A staff which must have dropt from his slack hand
And lay till now neglected in the grass.

Though weak his step and cautious, he appeared
To travel without pain, and I beheld,

With an astonishment but ill suppressed,

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His ghostly figure moving at my side ;

Nor could I, while we journeyed thus, forbear
To turn from present hardships to the past,

And speak of war, battle, and pestilence,

Sprinkling this talk with questions, better spared,

On what he might himself have seen or felt.

He all the while was in demeanour calm,

Concise in answer ; solemn and sublime

He might have seemed, but that in all he said

There was a strange half-absence, as of one

90

Knowing too well the importance of his theme,

But feeling it no longer. Our discourse

Soon ended, and together on we passed

In silence through a wood gloomy and still.

Up-turning, then, along an open field,

We reached a cottage. At the door I knocked,

And earnestly to charitable care

Commended him as a poor friendless man,

Belated and by sickness overcome.

Assured that now the traveller would repose

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In comfort, I entreated that henceforth

He would not linger in the public ways,

But ask for timely furtherance and help

Such as his state required. At this reproof,

With the same ghastly mildness in his look,

He said, " My trust is in the God of Heaven,

And in the eye of him who passes me ! "

The cottage door was speedily unbarred,

And now the soldier touched his hat once more
 With his lean hand, and in a faltering voice,
 Whose tone bespeak reviving interests
 Till then unfeet, he thanked me ; I returned
 The farewell blessing of the patient man,
 And so we parted. Back I cast a look,
 And lingered near the door a little space,
 Then sought with quiet heart my distant home.

110

BOOK V.—BOOKS.

The poet, after considering how perishable are the works of man, dreams a dream in which is revealed to him the immortality of poetry and geometric truth. His gratitude for inspired writers. Poetry and Nature are the best guides of childhood, and to them rather than to any arbitrary schemes should be entrusted the task of education. The boy of Windermere and his impressions of Nature unconsciously received. The sense of wonder in children awakened in various ways. Wordsworth's early love of poetry.

When Contemplation, like the night-calm felt
 Through earth and sky, spreads widely, and sends deep
 Into the soul its tranquillising power,
 Even then I sometimes grieve for thee, O Man,
 Earth's paramount Creature ! not so much for woes
 That thou endurest ; heavy though that weight be,
 Cloud-like it mounts, or touched with light divine
 Doth melt away ; but for those palms achieved,
 Through length of time, by patient exercise
 Of study and hard thought ; there, there, it is
 That sadness finds its fuel. Hitherto,
 In progress through this Verse, my mind hath looked
 Upon the speaking face of earth and heaven

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As her prime teacher, intercourse with man
 Established by the sovereign Intellect,
 Who through that bodily image hath diffused,
 As might appear to the eye of fleeting time,
 A deathless spirit. Thou also, man ! hast wrought,
 For commerce of thy nature with herself,
 Things that aspire to unconquerable life ;
 And yet we feel—we cannot choose but feel—
 That they must perish. Tremblings of the heart
 It gives, to think that our immortal being
 No more shall need such garments ; and yet man,
 As long as he shall be the child of earth,
 Might almost “ weep to have ” what he may lose,
 Nor be himself extinguished, but survive,
 Abject, depressed, forlorn, disconsolate.

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A thought is with me sometimes, and I say,—
 Should the whole frame of earth by inward throes
 Be wrenched, or fire come down from far to scorch
 Her pleasant habitations, and dry up
 Old Ocean, in his bed left singed and bare,
 Yet would the living Presence still subsist
 Victorious, and composure would ensue,
 And kindlings like the morning—presage sure
 Of day returning and of life revived.

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But all the meditations of mankind,
 Yea, all the adamantine holds of truth
 By reason built, or passion, which itself
 Is highest reason in a soul sublime ;
 The consecrated works of Bard and Sage,
 Sensuous or intellectual, wrought by men,
 Twin labourers and heirs of the same hopes ;
 Where would they be ? Oh ! why hath not the Mind
 Some element to stamp her image on
 In nature somewhat nearer to her own ?
 Why, gifted with such powers to send abroad
 Her spirit, must it lodge in shrines so frail ?

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One day, when from my lips a like complaint
Had fallen in presence of a studious friend,
He with a smile made answer, that in truth
'Twas going far to seek disquietude ;
But on the front of his reproof confessed
That he himself had oftentimes given way
To kindred hauntings. Whereupon I told,
That once in the stillness of a summer's noon,
While I was seated in a rocky cave
By the sea-side, perusing, so it chanced,
The famous history of the errant knight
Recorded by Cervantes, these same thoughts
Beset me, and to height unusual rose,
While listlessly I sate, and, having closed
The book, had turned my eyes toward the wide sea.
On poetry and geometric truth,
And their high privilege of lasting life,
From all internal injury exempt,
I mused ; upon these chiefly : and at length,
My senses yielding to the sultry air,
Sleep seized me, and I passed into a dream.
I saw before me stretched a boundless plain
Of sandy wilderness, all black and void,
And as I looked around, distress and fear
Came creeping over me, when at my side,
Close at my side, an uncouth shape appeared
Upon a dromedary, mounted high.
He seemed an Arab of the Bedouin tribes :
A lance he bore, and underneath one arm
A stone, and in the opposite hand a shell
Of a surpassing brightness. At the sight
Much I rejoiced, not doubting but a guide
Was present, one who with unerring skill
Would through the desert lead me ; and while yet
I looked and looked, self-questioned what this freight
Which the new-comer carried through the waste

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Could mean, the Arab told me that the stone
 (To give it in the language of the dream)
 Was "Euclid's Elements"; and "This," said he,
 "Is something of more worth"; and at the word
 Stretched forth the shell, so beautiful in shape, 90
 In colour so resplendent, with command
 That I should hold it to my ear. I did so,
 And heard that instant in an unknown tongue,
 Which yet I understood, articulate sounds,
 A loud prophetic blast of harmony;
 An Ode, in passion uttered, which foretold
 Destruction to the children of the earth
 By deluge, now at hand. No sooner ceased
 The song, than the Arab with calm look declared
 That all would come to pass of which the voice 100
 Had given forewarning, and that he himself
 Was going then to bury those two books:
 The one that held acquaintance with the stars,
 And wedded soul to soul in purest bond
 Of reason, undisturbed by space or time;
 The other that was a god, yea many gods,
 Had voices more than all the winds, with power
 To exhilarate the spirit, and to soothe,
 Through every clime, the heart of human kind.
 While this was uttering, strange as it may seem, 110
 I wondered not, although I plainly saw
 The one to be a stone, the other a shell;
 Nor doubted once but that they both were books,
 Having a perfect faith in all that passed.
 Far stronger, now, grew the desire I felt
 To cleave unto this man; but when I prayed
 To share his enterprise, he hurried on
 Reckless of me: I followed, not unseen,
 For oftentimes he cast a backward look,
 Grasping his twofold treasure.—Lance in rest, 120
 He rode, I keeping pace with him; and now

He, to my fancy, had become the knight
 Whose tale Cervantes tells ; yet not the knight,
 But was an Arab of the desert too ;
 Of these was neither, and was both at once.
 His countenance, meanwhile, grew more disturbed ;
 And, looking backwards when he looked, mine eyes
 Saw, over half the wilderness diffused,
 A bed of glittering light : I asked the cause :
 " It is," said he, " the waters of the deep
 Gathering upon us "; quickening then the pace
 Of the unwieldy creature he bestrode,
 He left me : I called after him aloud ;
 He heeded not ; but, with his twofold charge
 Still in his grasp, before me, full in view,
 Went hurrying o'er the illimitable waste,
 With the fleet waters of a drowning world
 In chase of him ; whereat I waked in terror,
 And saw the sea before me, and the book,
 In which I had been reading, at my side.

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Full often, taking from the world of sleep
 This Arab phantom, which I thus beheld,
 This semi-Quixote, I to him have given
 A substance, fancied him a living man,
 A gentle dweller in the desert, crazed
 By love and feeling, and internal thought
 Protracted among endless solitudes ;
 Have shaped him wandering upon this quest !
 Nor have I pitied him ; but rather felt
 Reverence was due to a being thus employed ;
 And thought that, in the blind and awful lair
 Of such a madness, reason did lie couched.
 Enow there are on earth to take in charge
 Their wives, their children, and their virgin loves,
 Or whatsoever else the heart holds dear ;
 Enow to stir for these ; yea, will I say,

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Contemplating in soberness the approach
 Of an event so dire, by signs in earth
 Or heaven made manifest, that I could share
 That maniac's fond anxiety, and go 160
 Upon like errand. Oftentimes at least
 Me hath such strong entrancement overcome,
 When I have held a volume in my hand,
 Poor earthly casket of immortal verse,
 Shakespeare, or Milton, labourers divine !

Great and benign, indeed, must be the power
 Of living nature, which could thus so long
 Detain me from the best of other guides
 And dearest helpers, left unthanked, unpraised,
 Even in the time of lisping infancy ; 170
 And later down, in prattling childhood even,
 While I was travelling back among those days,
 How could I ever play an ingrate's part ?
 Once more should I have made those bowers resound,
 By intermingling strains of thankfulness
 With their own thoughtless melodies ; at least
 It might have well beseemed me to repeat
 Some simply fashioned tale, to tell again,
 In slender accents of sweet verse, some tale
 That did bewitch me then, and soothes me now. 180
 O Friend ! O Poet ! brother of my soul,
 Think not that I could pass along untouched
 By these remembrances. Yet wherefore speak ?
 Why call upon a few weak words to say
 What is already written in the hearts
 Of all that breathe ?—what in the path of all
 Drops daily from the tongue of every child,
 Wherever man is found ? The trickling tear
 Upon the cheek of listening Infancy
 Proclaims it, and the insuperable look
 That drinks as if it never could be full. 190

That portion of my story I shall leave
There registered : whatever else of power
Or pleasure sown, or fostered thus, may be
Peculiar to myself, let that remain
Where still it works, though hidden from all search
Among the depths of time. Yet is it just
That here, in memory of all books which lay
Their sure foundations in the heart of man,
Whether by native prose, or numerous verse,
That in the name of all inspired souls—
From Homer the great Thunderer, from the voice
That roars along the bed of Jewish song,
And that more varied and elaborate,
Those trumpet-tones of harmony that shake
Our shores in England,—from those loftiest notes
Down to the low and wren-like warblings, made
For cottagers and spinners at the wheel,
And sun-burnt travellers resting their tired limbs,
Stretched under wayside hedge-rows, ballad tunes,
Food for the hungry ears of little ones,
And of old men who have survived their joys—
'Tis just that in behalf of these, the works,
And of the men that framed them, whether known,
Or sleeping nameless in their scattered graves,
That I should here assert their rights, attest
Their honours, and should, once for all, pronounce
Their benediction ; speak of them as Powers
For ever to be hallowed ; only less,
For what we are and what we may become,
Than Nature's self, which is the breath of God,
Or His pure Word by miracle revealed.

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220

Rarely and with reluctance would I stoop
To transitory themes ; yet I rejoice,
And, by these thoughts admonished, will pour out
Thanks with uplifted heart, that I was reared

Safe from an evil which these days have laid
 Upon the children of the land, a pest
 That might have dried me up, body and soul.
 This verse is dedicate to Nature's self,
 And things that teach as Nature teaches : then,
 Oh ! where had been the Man, the Poet where,
 Where had we been, we two, beloved Friend !
 If in the season of unperilous choice,
 In lieu of wandering, as we did, through vales
 Rich with indigenous produce, open ground
 Of Fancy, happy pastures ranged at will,
 We had been followed, hourly watched, and noosed,
 Each in his several melancholy walk
 Stringed like a poor man's heifer at its feed,
 Led through the lanes in forlorn servitude ;
 Or rather like a stalled ox debarred
 From touch of growing grass, that may not taste
 A flower till it have yielded up its sweets
 A prelibation to the mower's scythe.

Behold the parent hen amid her brood,
 Though fledged and feathered, and well pleased to part
 And straggle from her presence, still a brood,
 And she herself from the maternal bond
 Still undischarged ; yet doth she little more
 Than move with them in tenderness and love,
 A centre to the circle which they make ;
 And now and then, alike from need of theirs
 And call of her own natural appetites,
 She scratches, ransacks up the earth for food,
 Which they partake at pleasure. Early died
 My honoured Mother, she who was the heart
 And hinge of all our learnings and our loves :
 She left us destitute, and, as we might,
 Trooping together. Little suits it me
 To break upon the sabbath of her rest

230

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260

With any thought that looks at others' blame ;
 Nor would I praise her but in perfect love.
 Hence am I checked : but let me boldly say,
 In gratitude, and for the sake of truth,
 Unheard by her, that she, not falsely taught,
 Fetching her goodness rather from times past,
 Than shaping novelties for times to come,
 Had no presumption, no such jealousy,
 Nor did by habit of her thoughts mistrust
 Our nature, but had virtual faith that He
 Who fills the mother's breast with innocent milk,
 Doth also for our nobler part provide,
 Under His great correction and control,
 As innocent instincts, and as innocent food ;
 Or draws for minds that are left free to trust
 In the simplicities of opening life
 Sweet honey out of spurned or dreaded weeds.
 This was her creed, and therefore she was pure
 From anxious fear of error or mishap,
 And evil, overweeningly so called ;
 Was not puffed up by false unnatural hopes,
 Nor selfish with unnecessary cares,
 Nor with impatience from the season asked
 More than its timely produce ; rather loved
 The hours for what they are, than from regard
 Glanced on their promises in restless pride.
 Such was she—not from faculties more strong
 Than others have, but from the times, perhaps,
 And spot in which she lived, and through a grace
 Of modest meekness, simple-mindedness,
 A heart that found benignity and hope,
 Being itself benign.

270

280

290

My drift I fear

Is scarcely obvious ; but, that common sense
 May try this modern system by its fruits,
 Leave let me take to piace before her sight

A specimen pourtrayed with faithful hand.
 Full early trained to worship seemliness,
 This model of a child is never known
 To mix in quarrels ; that were far beneath 300
 Its dignity ; with gifts he bubbles o'er
 As generous as a fountain ; selfishness
 May not come near him, nor the little throng
 Of flitting pleasures tempt him from his path ;
 The wandering beggars propagate his name.
 Dumb creatures find him tender as a nun,
 And natural or supernatural fear,
 Unless it leap upon him in a dream,
 Touches him not. To enhance the wonder, see
 How arch his notices, how nice his sense 310
 Of the ridiculous ; not blind is he
 To the broad follies of the licensed world,
 Yet innocent himself withal, though shrewd,
 And can read lectures upon innocence ;
 A miracle of scientific lore,
 Ships he can guide across the pathless sea,
 And tell you all their cunning ; he can read
 The inside of the earth, and spell the stars ;
 He knows the policies of foreign lands ;
 Can string you names of districts, cities, towns, 320
 The whole world over, tight as beads of dew
 Upon a gossamer thread ; he sifts, he weighs ;
 All things are put to question ; he must live
 Knowing that he grows wiser every day
 Or else not live at all, and seeing too
 Each little drop of wisdom as it falls
 Into the dimpling cistern of his heart :
 For this unnatural growth the trainer blame,
 Pity the tree.—Poor human vanity,
 Wert thou extinguished, little would be left 330
 Which he could truly love ; but how escape ?
 For, ever as a thought of purer birth

Rises to lead him toward a better clime,
 Some intermeddler still is on the watch
 To drive him back, and pound him, like a stray,
 Within the pinfold of his own conceit.
 Meanwhile old grandame earth is grieved to find
 The playthings, which her love designed for him,
 Unthought of : in their woodland beds the flowers
 Weep, and the river sides are all forlorn.

340

Oh ! give us once again the wishing-cap
 Of Fortunatus, and the invisible coat
 Of Jack the Giant-Killer, Robin Hood,
 And Sabra in the forest with St. George !
 The child, whose love is here, at least, doth reap
 One precious gain, that he forgets himself.

These mighty workmen of our later age,
 Who, with a broad highway, have overbridged
 The foward chaos of futurity,
 Tamed to their bidding ; they who have the skill
 To manage books, and things, and make them act
 On infant minds as surely as the sun
 Deals with a flower ; the keepers of our time,
 The guides and wardens of our faculties,
 Sages who in their prescience would control
 All accidents, and to the very road
 Which they have fashioned would confine us down,
 Like engines ; when will their presumption learn,
 That in the unreasoning progress of the world
 A wiser spirit is at work for us,
 A better eye than theirs, most prodigal
 Of blessings, and most studious of our good,
 Even in what seem our most unfruitful hours ?

350

360

There was a Boy : ye knew him well, ye cliffs
 And islands of Winander !—many a time
 At evening, when the earliest stars began

To move along the edges of the hills,
 Rising or setting, would he stand alone
 Beneath the trees or by the glimmering lake,
 And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands
 Pressed closely palm to palm, and to his mouth
 Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,
 Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,
 That they might answer him ; and they would shout
 Across the watery vale, and shout again,
 Responsive to his call, with quivering peals,
 And long halloos and screams, and echoes loud,
 Redoubled and redoubled, concourse wild
 Of jocund din : and, when a lengthened pause
 Of silence came and baffled his best skill,
 Then sometimes, in that silence while he hung
 Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
 Has carried far into his heart the voice
 Of mountain torrents ; or the visible scene
 Would enter unawares into his mind,
 With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
 Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received
 Into the bosom of the steady lake.

370

380

This Boy was taken from his mates, and died
 In childhood, ere he was full twelve years old.
 Fair is the spot, most beautiful the vale
 Where he was born ; the grassy churchyard hangs
 Upon a slope above the village school,
 And through that churchyard when my way has led
 On summer evenings, I believe that there
 A long half hour together I have stood
 Mute, looking at the grave in which he lies !
 Even now appears before the mind's clear eye
 That self-same village church ; I see her sit
 (The thronèd Lady whom erewhile we hailed)
 On her green hill, forgetful of this Boy

390

400

Who slumbers at her feet,—forgetful, too,
 Of all her silent neighbourhood of graves,
 And listening only to the gladsome sounds
 That, from the rural school ascending, play
 Beneath her and about her. May she long
 Behold a race of young ones like to those
 With whom I herded!—(easily, indeed,
 We might have fed upon a fatter soil
 Of arts and letters—but be that forgiven)—
 A race of real children; not too wise,
 Too learned, or too good; but wanton, fresh,
 And bandied up and down by love and hate;
 Not unresentful where self-justified;
 Fierce, moody, patient, venturesome, modest, shy;
 Mad at their sports like withered leaves in winds
 Though doing wrong and suffering, and full oft
 Bending beneath our life's mysterious weight
 Of pain, and doubt, and fear, yet yielding not
 In happiness to the happiest upon earth.
 Simplicity in habit, truth in speech,
 Be these the daily strengtheners of their minds;
 May books and Nature be their early joy!
 And knowledge rightly honoured with that name—
 Knowledge not purchased by the loss of power!

Well do I call to mind the very week
 When I was first intrusted to the care
 Of that sweet Valley; when its paths, its shores,
 And brooks were like a dream of novelty
 To my half-infant thought; that very week,
 While I was roving up and down alone,
 Seeking I knew not what, I chanced to cross
 One of those open fields, which, shaped like ears,
 Make green peninsulas on Esthwaite's Lake:
 Twilight was coming on, yet through the gloom
 Appeared distinctly on the opposite shore

410

420

430

A heap of garments, as if left by one
 Who might have there been bathing. Long I watched,
 But no one owned them ; meanwhile the calm lake
 Grew dark with all the shadows on its breast, 440
 And, now and then, a fish up-leaping snapped
 The breathless stillness. The succeeding day,
 Those unclaimed garments telling a plain tale
 Drew to the spot an anxious crowd ; some looked
 In passive expectation from the shore,
 While from a boat others hung o'er the deep,
 Sounding with grappling irons and long poles.
 At last, the dead man, 'mid that beauteous scene
 Of trees and hills and water, bolt upright
 Rose, with his ghastly face, a spectre shape 450
 Of terror ; yet no soul-debasing fear,
 Young as I was, a child not nine years old,
 Possessed me, for my inner eye had seen
 Such sights before, among the shining streams
 Of faery land, the forest of romance.
 Their spirit hallowed the sad spectacle
 With decoration of ideal grace ;
 A dignity, a smoothness, like the works
 Of Grecian art, and purest poesy.

A precious treasure had I long possessed, 460
 A little yellow, canvas-covered book,
 A slender abstract of the Arabian tales ;
 And, from companions in a new abode,
 When first I learnt, that this dear prize of mine
 Was but a block hewn from a mighty quarry—
 That there were four large volumes, laden all
 With kindred matter, 'twas to me, in truth,
 A promise scarcely earthly. Instantly,
 With one not richer than myself, I made
 A covenant that each should lay aside
 The moneys he possessed, and hoard up more, 470

Till our joint savings had amassed enough
 To make this book our own. Through several months,
 In spite of all temptation, we preserved
 Religiously that vow ; but firmness failed,
 Nor were we ever masters of our wish.

And when thereafter to my father's house
 The holidays returned me, there to find
 That golden store of books which I had left,
 What joy was mine ! How often in the course
 Of those glad respites, though a soft west wind
 Ruffled the waters to the angler's wish,
 For a whole day together, have I lain
 Down by thy side, O Derwent ! murmuring stream,
 On the hot stones, and in the glaring sun,
 And there have read, devouring as I read,
 Defrauding the day's glory, desperate !
 Till with a sudden bound of smart reproach,
 Such as an idler deals with in his shame,
 I to the sport betook myself again.

480

490

A gracious spirit o'er this earth presides,
 And o'er the heart of man : invisibly
 It comes, to works of unreproved delight,
 And tendency benign, directing those
 Who care not, know not, think not what they do.
 The tales that charm away the wakeful night
 In Araby, romances ; legends penned
 For solace by dim light of monkish lamps ;
 Fictions, for ladies of their love, devised
 By youthful squires ; adventures endless, spun
 By the dismantled warrior in old age,
 Out of the bowels of those very schemes
 In which his youth did first extravagant ;
 These spread like day, and something in the shape
 Of these will live till man shall be no more.

500

Dumb yearnings, hidden appetites, are ours,
 And *they must* have their food. Our childhood sits,
 Our simple childhood, sits upon a throne
 That hath more power than all the elements.

I guess not what this tells of Being past,
 Nor what it augurs of the life to come ;
 But so it is, and, in that dubious hour,
 That twilight when we first begin to see
 This dawning earth, to recognise, expect,
 And, in the long probation that ensues,
 The time of trial, ere we learn to live
 In reconciliation with our stinted powers ;
 To endure this state of meagre vassalage,
 Unwilling to forego, confess, submit,
 Uneasy and unsettled, yoke-fellows

510

To custom, mettlesome, and not yet tamed
 And humbled down ;—oh ! then we feel, we feel,
 We know where we have friends. Ye dreamers, then,
 Forgers of daring tales ! we bless you then,
 Impostors, drivellers, dotards, as the ape
 Philosophy will call you : *then* we feel
 With what, and how great might ye are in league,
 Who make our wish, our power, our thought a deed,
 An empire, a possession,—ye whom time
 And seasons serve ; all Faculties to whom
 Earth crouches, the elements are potter's clay,
 Space like a heaven filled up with northern lights,
 Here, nowhere, there, and everywhere at once.

520

Relinquishing this lofty eminence
 For ground, though humbler, not the less a tract
 Of the same isthmus, which our spirits cross
 In progress from their native continent
 To earth and human life, the Song might dwell
 On that delightful time of growing youth
 When craving for the marvellous gives way

530

540

To strengthening love for things that we have seen :
 When sober truth and steady sympathies,
 Offered to notice by less daring pens,
 Take firmer hold of us, and words themselves
 Move us with conscious pleasure.

I am sad

At thought of raptures now for ever flown ;
 Almost to tears I sometimes could be sad
 To think of, to read over, many a page,
 Poems withal of name, which at that time
 Did never fail to entrance me, and are now
 Dead in my eyes, dead as a theatre
 Fresh emptied of spectators. Twice five years
 Or less I might have seen, when first my mind
 With conscious pleasure opened to the charm
 Of words in tuneful order, found them sweet
 For their own *sakes*, a passion, and a power ;
 And phrases pleased me chosen for delight,
 For pomp, or love. Oft, in the public roads
 Yet unfrequented, while the morning light
 Was yellowing the hill tops, I went abroad
 With a dear friend, and for the better part
 Of two delightful hours we strolled along
 By the still borders of the misty lake,
 Repeating favourite verses with one voice,
 Or conning more, as happy as the birds
 That round us chaunted. Well might we be glad,
 Lifted above the ground by airy fancies,
 More bright than madness or the dreams of wine ;
 And, though full oft the objects of our love
 Were false, and in their splendour over-wrought,
 Yet was there surely then no vulgar power
 Working within us,—nothing less, in truth,
 Than that most noble attribute of man,
 Though yet untutored and inordinate,
 That wish for something loftier, more adorned,

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570

Than is the common aspect, daily garb,
 Of human life. What wonder, then, if sounds
 Of exultation echoed through the groves !
 For, images, and sentiments, and words,
 And everything encountered or pursued
 In that delicious world of poesy,
 Kept holiday, a never-ending show,
 With music, incense, festival, and flowers !

580

Here must we pause : this only let me add,
 From heart-experience, and in humblest sense
 Of modesty, that he, who in his youth
 A daily wanderer among woods and fields
 With living Nature hath been intimate,
 Not only in that raw unpractised time
 Is stirred to ecstasy, as others are,
 By glittering verse ; but further, doth receive,
 In measure only dealt out to himself,
 Knowledge and increase of enduring joy
 From the great Nature that exists in works
 Of mighty Poets. Visionary power
 Attends the motions of the viewless winds,
 Embodied in the mystery of words :
 There, darkness makes abode, and all the host
 Of shadowy things work endless changes,—there,
 As in a mansion like their proper home,
 Even forms and substances are circumfused
 By that transparent veil with light divine,
 And, through the turnings intricate of verse,
 Present themselves as objects recognised,
 In flashes, and with glory not their own.

590

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BOOK VI.—CAMBRIDGE AND THE ALPS.

*Accompanied by a College friend, the poet sets out for Italy.
The companions pass through France and witness the
celebrations in honour of the Feast of the Federation.
The Convent of Chartreuse.*

(ll. 322-488.)

When the third summer freed us from restraint,
A youthful friend, he too a mountaineer,
Not slow to share my wishes, took his staff,
And sallying forth, we journeyed side by side,
Bound to the distant Alps. A hardy slight
Did this unprecedented course imply
Of college studies and their set rewards ;
Nor had, in truth, the scheme been formed by me
Without uneasy forethought of the pain,
The censures, and ill-omening of those
To whom my worldly interests were dear. 10
But Nature then was sovereign in my mind,
And mighty forms, seizing a youthful fancy,
Had given a charter to irregular hopes.
In any age of uneventful calm
Among the nations, surely would my heart
Have been possessed by similar desire ;
But Europe at that time was thrilled with joy,
France standing on the top of golden hours,
And human nature seeming born again. 20

Lightly equipped, and but a few brief looks
Cast on the white cliffs of our native shore
From the receding vessel's deck, we chanced
To land at Calais on the very eve
Of that great federal day ; and there we saw,
In a mean city, and among a few,

How bright a face is worn when joy of one
 Is joy for tens of millions. Southward thence
 We held our way, direct through hamlets, towns,
 Gaudy with reliques of that festival, 30
 Flowers left to wither on triumphal arcs,
 And window-garlands. On the public roads,
 And, once, three days successively, through paths
 By which our toilsome journey was abridged,
 Among sequestered villages we walked
 And found benevolence and blessedness
 Spread like a fragrance everywhere, when spring
 Hath left no corner of the land untouched :
 Where elms for many and many a league in files
 With their thin umbrage, on the stately roads 40
 Of that great kingdom, rustled o'er our heads,
 For ever near us as we paced along :
 How sweet at such a time, with such delight
 On every side, in prime of youthful strength,
 To feed a Poet's tender melancholy
 And fond conceit of sadness, with the sound
 Of undulations varying as might please
 The wind that swayed them ; once, and more than once,
 Unhoused beneath the evening star we saw
 Dances of liberty, and, in late hours 50
 Of darkness, dances in the open air
 Deftly prolonged, though grey-haired lookers on
 Might waste their breath in chiding.

Under hills—

The vine-clad hills and slopes of Burgundy,
 Upon the bosom of the gentle Saone
 We glided forward with the flowing stream.
 Swift Rhone ! thou wert the *wings* on which we cut
 A winding passage with majestic ease
 Between thy lofty rocks. Enchanting show
 Those woods and farms and orchards did present,
 And single cottages and lurking towns, 60

Reach after reach, succession without end
Of deep and stately vales ! A lonely pair
Of strangers, till day closed, we sailed along,
Clustered together with a merry crowd
Of those emancipated, a blithe host
Of travellers, chiefly delegates returning
From the great spousals newly solemnized
At their chief city, in the sight of Heaven.
Like bees they swarmed, gaudy and gay as bees ; 70
Some vapoured in the unruliness of joy,
And with their swords flourished as if to fight
The saucy air. In this proud company
We landed—took with them our evening meal,
Guests welcome almost as the angels were
To Abraham of old. The supper done,
With flowing cups elate and happy thoughts
We rose at signal given, and formed a ring
And, hand in hand, danced round and round the board ;
All hearts were open, every tongue was loud 80
With amity and glee ; we bore a name
Honoured in France, the name of Englishmen,
And hospitably did they give us hail,
As their forerunners in a glorious course ;
And round and round the board we danced again.
With these blithe friends our voyage we renewed
At early dawn. The monastery bells
Made a sweet jingling in our youthful ears ;
The rapid river flowing without noise,
And each uprising or receding spire 90
Spake with a sense of peace, at intervals
Touching the heart amid the boisterous crew
By whom we were encompassed. Taking leave
Of this glad throng, foot-travellers side by side
Measuring our steps in quiet, we pursued
Our journey, and ere twice the sun had set
Beheld the Convent of Chartreuse, and there

Rested within an awful *solitude* ;
Yes ; for even then no other than a place
Of soul-affecting *solitude* appeared
That far-famed region, though our eyes had seen,
As toward the sacred mansion we advanced,
Arms flashing, and a military glare
Of riotous men commissioned to expel
The blameless inmates, and belike subvert
That frame of social being, which so long
Had bodied forth the ghostliness of things
In silence visible and perpetual calm.

—“Stay, stay your sacrilegious hands !”—The voice
Was Nature’s, uttered from her Alpine throne ;
I heard it then, and seem to hear it now—

“Your impious work forbear : perish what may,
Let this one temple last, be this one spot
Of earth devoted to eternity !”

She ceased to speak, but while St Bruno’s pines
Waved their dark tops, not silent as they waved,
And while below, along their several beds,
Murmured the sister streams of Life and Death,
Thus by conflicting passions pressed, my heart
Responded ; “Honour to the patriot’s zeal !

Glory and hope to new-born Liberty !

Hail to the mighty projects of the time !

Discerning sword that Justice wields, do thou
Go forth and prosper ; and, ye purging fires,
Up to the loftiest towers of Pride ascend,
Fanned by the breath of angry Providence.

But oh ! if Past and Future be the wings
On whose support harmoniously conjoined
Moves the great spirit of human knowledge, spare
These courts of mystery, where a step advanced
Between the portals of the shadowy rocks
Leaves far behind life’s treacherous vanities,
For penitential tears and trembling hopes

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130

Exchanged—to equalise in God's pure sight
 Monarch and peasant : be the house redeemed
 With its unworldly votaries, for the sake
 Of conquest over sense, hourly achieved
 Through faith and meditative reason, resting
 Upon the word of heaven-imparted truth,
 Calmly triumphant ; and for humbler claim
 Of that imaginative impulse sent
 From these majestic floods, yon shining cliffs,
 The untransmuted shapes of many worlds,
 Cerulean ether's pure inhabitants,
 These forests unapproachable by death,
 That shall endure as long as man endures,
 To think, to hope, to worship, and to feel,
 To struggle, to be lost within himself
 In trepidation, from the blank abyss
 To look with bodily eyes, and be consoled." 140
 Not seldom since that moment have I wished
 That thou, O Friend ! the trouble or the calm
 Hadst shared, when, from profane regards apart,
 In sympathetic reverence we trod
 The floors of those dim cloisters, till that hour,
 From their foundation, strangers to the presence
 Of unrestricted and unthinking man.
 Abroad, how cheerfully the sunshine lay
 Upon the open lawns ! Vallombre's groves
 Entering, we fed the soul with darkness ; thence
 Issued, and with uplifted eyes beheld,
 In different quarters of the bending sky,
 The cross of Jesus stand erect, as if
 Hands of angelic powers had fixed it there,
 Memorial reverenced by a thousand storms ;
 Yet then, from the undiscriminating sweep
 And rage of one State-whirlwind, insecure.

140

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160

Crossing the Alps.

(ll. 524-540.)

From a bare ridge we . . . first beheld
Unveiled the summit of Mont Blanc, and grieved
To have a soulless image on the eye
That had usurped upon a living thought
That never more could be. The wondrous Vale
Of Chamouny stretched far below, and soon
With its dumb cataracts and streams of ice,
A motionless array of mighty waves,
Five rivers broad and vast, made rich amends,
And reconciled us to realities ;
There small birds warble from the leafy trees,
The eagle soars high in the element,
There doth the reaper bind the yellow sheaf,
The maiden spread the haycock in the sun,
While Winter like a well-tamed lion walks,
Descending from the mountain to make sport
Among the cottages by beds of flowers.

10

(ll. 557-640.)

Yet still in me with those soft luxuries
Mixed something of stern mood, an under-thirst
Of vigour seldom utterly allayed :
And from that source how different a sadness
Would issue, let one incident make known.
When from the Vallais we had turned, and clomb
Along the Simplon's steep and rugged road,
Following a band of muleteers, we reached
A halting-place, where all together took
Their noon-tide meal. Hastily rose our guide,
Leaving us at the board ; awhile we lingered,
Then paced the beaten downward way that led

20

Right to a rough stream's edge, and there broke off ; 30
 The only track now visible was one
 That from the torrent's further brink held forth
 Conspicuous invitation to ascend
 A lofty mountain. After brief delay
 Crossing the unbridged stream, that road we took,
 And climb with eagerness, till anxious fears
 Intruded, for we failed to overtake
 Our comrades gone before. By fortunate chance,
 While every moment added doubt to doubt,
 A peasant met us, from whose mouth we learned 40
 That to the spot which had perplexed us first
 We must descend, and there should find the road,
 Which in the stony channel of the stream
 Lay a few steps, and then along its banks ;
 And, that our future course, all plain to sight,
 Was downwards, with the current of that stream.
 Loth to believe what we so grieved to hear,
 For still we had hopes that pointed to the clouds,
 We questioned him again, and yet again ;
 But every word that from the peasant's lips 50
 Came in reply, translated by our feelings,
 Ended in this,—*that we had crossed the Alps.*

Imagination—here the Power so called
 Through sad incompetence of human speech,
 That awful Power rose from the mind's abyss
 Like an unfathered vapour that enwraps,
 At once, some lonely traveller. I was lost ;
 Halted without an effort to break through ;
 But to my conscious soul I now can say—
 “ I recognise thy glory : ” in such strength 60
 Of usurpation, when the light of sense
 Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed
 The invisible world, doth greatness make abode.
 There harbours ; whether we be young or old,

Our destiny, our being's heart and home,
 Is with infinitude, and only there ;
 With hope it is, hope that can never die,
 Effort, and expectation, and desire,
 And something evermore about to be.
 Under such banners militant, the soul
 Seeks for no trophies, struggles for no spoils
 That may attest her prowess, blest in thoughts
 That are their own perfection, and reward,
 Strong in herself and in beatitude
 That hides her, like the mighty flood of Nile
 Poured from his fount of Abyssinian clouds
 To fertilise the whole Egyptian plain.

70

The melancholy slackening that ensued
 Upon those tidings by the peasant given
 Was soon dislodged. Downwards we hurried fast,
 And, with the half-shaped road which we had missed,
 Entered a narrow chasm. The brook and road
 Were fellow-travellers in this gloomy strait,
 And with them did we journey several hours
 At a slow pace. The immeasurable height
 Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
 The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
 And in the narrow rent at every turn
 Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,
 The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
 The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,
 Black drizzling crags that spake by the way-side
 As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
 And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
 The unfettered clouds and region of the Heavens,
 Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light—
Were all like workings of one mind, the features
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree ;
Characters of the great Apocalypse,

80

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The types and symbols of Eternity,
Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.

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BOOK VII.—RESIDENCE IN LONDON.

On leaving Cambridge, the poet takes up his residence for a while in London. The sights of the city.

(ll. 77-87.)

There was a time when whatso'er is feigned
Of airy palaces, and gardens built
By Genii of romance ; or hath in grave
Authentic history been set forth of Rome,
Alcairo, Babylon, or Persepolis ;
Or given upon report by pilgrim friars,
Of golden cities ten months' journey deep
Among Tartarian wilds—fell short, far short,
Of what my fond simplicity believed
And thought of London—held me by a chain
Less strong of wonder and obscure delight.

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(ll. 119-228.)

O, wond'rous power of words, by simple faith
Licensed to take the meaning that we love !
Vauxhall and Ranelagh ! I then had heard
Of your green groves, and wilderness of lamps
Dimming the stars, and fireworks magical,
And gorgeous ladies, under splendid domes,
Floating in dance, or warbling high in air
The songs of spirits ! Nor had Fancy fed
With less delight upon that other class
Of marvels, broad-day wonders permanent :
The River proudly bridged ; the dizzy top

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And Whispering Gallery of St. Paul's ; the tombs
 Of Westminster ; the Giants of Guildhall ;
 Bedlam, and those carved maniacs at the gafes,
 Perpetually recumbent ; Statues—man,
 And the horse under him—in gilded pomp
 Adorning flowery gardens, 'mid vast squares ;
 The Monument, and that Chamber of the Tower
 Where England's sovereigns sit in long array,
 Their steeds bestriding,—every mimic shape
 Cased in the gleaming mail the monarch wore,
 Whether for gorgeous tournament addressed,
 Or life or death upon the battle-field.
 Those bold imaginations in due time
 Had vanished, leaving others in their stead :
 And now I looked upon the living scene ;
 Familiarly perused it ; oftentimes,
 In spite of strongest disappointment, pleased
 Through courteous self-submission, as a tax
 Paid to the object by prescriptive right.

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Rise up, thou monstrous ant-hill on the plain
 Of a too busy world ! Before me flow,
 Thou endless stream of men and moving things !
 Thy every-day appearance, as it strikes—
 With wonder heightened, or sublimed by awe—
 On strangers of all ages ; the quick dance
 Of colours, lights, and forms ; the deafening din ;
 The comers and the goers face to face,
 Face after face ; the string of dazzling wares,
 Shop after shop, with symbols, blazoned names,
 And all the tradesman's honours overhead :
 Here, fronts of houses, like a title-page,
 With letters huge inscribed from top to toe,
 Stationed above the door, like guardian saints ;
 There, allegoric shapes, female or male,
 Or physiognomies of real men,

Land-warriors, kings, or admirals of the sea,
 Boyle, Shakspeare, Newton, or the attractive head
 Of some quack-doctor, famous in his day.

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Meanwhile the roar continues, till at length,
 Escaped as from an enemy, we turn
 Abruptly into some sequestered nook,
 Still as a sheltered place when winds blow loud !
 At leisure, thence, through tracts of thin resort,
 And sights and sounds that come at intervals,
 We take our way. A raree-show is here,
 With children gathered round ; another street
 Presents a company of dancing dogs,
 Or dromedary, with an antic pair
 Of monkeys on his back ; a minstrel band
 Of Savoyards ; or, single and alone,
 An English ballad-singer. Private courts,
 Gloomy as coffins, and unsightly lanes
 Thrilled by some female vendor's scream, belike
 The very shrillest of all London cries,
 May then entangle our impatient steps ;
 Conducted through those labyrinths, unawares,
 To privileged regions and inviolate,
 Where from their airy lodges studious lawyers
 Look out on waters, walks, and gardens green.

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Thence back into the throng, until we reach,
 Following the tide that slackens by degrees,
 Some half-frequented scene, where wider streets
 Bring straggling breezes of suburban air.
 Here files of ballads dangle from dead walls ;
 Advertisements, of giant-size, from high
 Press forward, in all colours, on the sight ;
 These, bold in conscious merit, lower down ;
 That, fronted with a most imposing word,
 Is, peradventure, one in masquerade.

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As on the broadening causeway we advance,
Behold, turned upwards, a face hard and strong
In lineaments, and red with over-toil.

'Tis one encountered here and everywhere ;
A travelling cripple, by the trunk cut short,
And stumping on his arms. In sailor's garb
Another lies at length, beside a range
Of well-formed characters, with chalk inscribed
Upon the smooth flat stones : the Nurse is here,
The Bachelor, that loves to sun himself,
The military Idler, and the Dame,
That field-ward takes her walk with decent steps.

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Now homeward through the thickening hubbub, where
See, among less distinguishable shapes,
The begging scavenger, with hat in hand ;
The Italian, as he thrids his way with care,
Steadying, far-seen, a frame of images
Upon his head ; with basket at his breast
The Jew ; the stately and slow-moving Turk,
With freight of slippers piled beneath his arm !

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Enough ;—the mighty concourse I surveyed
With no unthinking mind, well pleased to note
Among the crowd all specimens of man,
Through all the colours which the sun bestows,
And every character of form and face :
The Swede, the Russian ; from the genial south,
The Frenchman and the Spaniard ; from remote
America, the Hunter-Indian ; Moors,
Malays, Lascars, the Tartar, the Chinese,
And Negro Ladies in white muslin gowns.

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The sense of "this unintelligible world" in the midst of the city's tumult.

(ll. 619-649.)

As the black storm upon the mountain-top
 Sets off the sunbeam in the valley, so
 That huge fermenting mass of humankind
 Serves as a solemn background, or relief,
 To single forms and objects, whence they draw,
 For feeling and contemplative regard,
 More than inherent liveliness and power.
 How oft, amid those overflowing streets,
 Have I gone forward with the crowd, and said
 Unto myself, "The face of every one
 That passes by me is a mystery!"
 Thus have I looked, nor ceased to look, oppressed
 By thoughts of what and whither, when and how,
 Until the shapes before my eyes became
 A second-sight procession, such as glides
 Over still mountains, or appears in dreams;
 And once, far-travelled in such mood, beyond
 The reach of common indication, lost
 Amid the moving pageant, I was smitten
 Abruptly, with the view (a sight not rare)
 Of a blind Beggar, who, with upright face,
 Stood, propped against a wall, upon his chest
 Wearing a written paper, to explain
 His story, whence he came, and who he was.
 Caught by the spectacle my mind turned round
 As with the might of waters; an apt type
 This label seemed of the utmost we can know,
 Both of ourselves and of the universe;
 And, on the shape of that unmoving man,
 His steadfast face and sightless eyes, I gazed,
 As if admonished from another world.

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Intimations of order in apparent chaos.

(ll. 731-736, 745-end.)

But though the picture weary out the eye,
 By nature an unmanageable sight,
 It is not wholly so to him who looks
 In steadiness, who hath among least things
 An under-sense of greatest ; sees the parts
 As parts, but with a feeling of the whole.
 Think, how the everlasting streams and woods,
 Stretched and still stretching far and wide, exalt
 The roving Indian, on his desert sands :
 What grandeur not unfelt, what pregnant show
 Of beauty, meets the sun-burnt Arab's eye :
 And, as the sea propels, from zone to zone,
 Its currents ; magnifies its shoals of life
 Beyond all compass ; spreads, and sends aloft
 Armies of clouds,—even so, its powers and aspects
 Shape for mankind, by principles as fixed,
 The views and aspirations of the soul
 To majesty. Like virtue have the forms
 Perennial of the ancient hills ; nor less
 The changeful language of their countenances
 Quickens the slumbering mind, and aids the thoughts,
 However multitudinous, to move
 With order and relation. This, if still,
 As hitherto, in freedom I may speak,
 Not violating any just restraint,
 As may be hoped, of real modesty,—
 This did I feel, in London's vast domain.
 The Spirit of Nature was upon me there ;
 The soul of Beauty and enduring Life
 Vouchsafed her inspiration, and diffused,
 Through meagre lines and colours, and the press
 Of self-destroying, transitory things,
 Composure, and ennobling Harmony.

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Book VIII.—RETROSPECT.

Man as first known by the poet.

(ll. 215-281.)

Hail to you
 Moors, mountains, headlands, and ye hollow vales,
 Ye long deep channels for the Atlantic's voice,
 Powers of my native region ! Ye that seize
 The heart with firmer grasp ! Your snows and streams
 Ungovernable, and your terrifying winds,
 That howl so dismally for him who treads
 Companionless your awful solitudes !
 There, 'tis the shepherd's task the winter long
 To wait upon the storms : of their approach 10
 Sagacious, into sheltering coves he drives
 His flock, and thither from the homestead bears
 A toilsome burden up the craggy ways,
 And deals it out, their regular nourishment
 Strewn on the frozen snow. And when the spring
 Looks out, and all the pastures dance with lambs,
 And when the flock, with warmer weather, climbs
 Higher and higher, him his office leads
 To watch their goings, whatsoever track
 The wanderers choose. For this he quits his home 20
 At day-spring, and no sooner doth the sun
 Begin to strike him with a fire-like heat,
 Than he lies down upon some shining rock,
 And breakfasts with his dog. When they have stolen,
 As is their wont, a pittance from strict time,
 For rest not needed or exchange of love,
 Then from his couch he starts ; and now his feet
 Crush out a livelier fragrance from the flowers
 Of lowly thyme, by Nature's skill enwrought
 In the wild turf : the lingering dews of morn 30
 Smoke round him, as from hill to hill he hies,

His staff pretending like a hunter's spear,
Or by its aid leaping from crag to crag,
And o'er the brawling beds of unbridged streams.
Philosophy, methinks, at Fancy's call,
Might deign to follow him through what he does
Or sees in his day's march ; himself he feels,
In those vast regions where his service lies,
A freeman, wedded to his life of hope
And hazard, and hard labour interchanged
With that majestic indolence so dear
To native man. A rambling schoolboy, thus
I felt his presence in his own domain,
As of a lord and master, or a power,
Or genius, under Nature, under God,
Presiding ; and severest solitude
Had more commanding looks when he was there.
When up the lonely brooks on rainy days
Angling I went, or trod the trackless hills
By mists bewildered, suddenly mine eyes
Have glanced upon him distant a few steps,
In size a giant, stalking through thick fog,
His sheep like Greenland bears ; or, as he stepped
Beyond the boundary line of some hill-shadow,
His form hath flashed upon me, glorified
By the deep radiance of the setting sun :
Or him have I descried in distant sky,
A solitary object and sublime,
Above all height ! like an aerial cross
Stationed alone upon a spiry rock
Of the Chartreuse, for worship. Thus was man
Ennobled outwardly before my sight,
And thus my heart was early introduced
To an unconscious love and reverence
Of human nature ; hence the human form
To me became an index of delight,
Of grace and honour, power and worthiness.

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BOOK IX.—RESIDENCE IN FRANCE.

A second visit to France (November, 1791—December, 1792).

Michel Beaupuy.

(ll. 262-430.)

Meantime, day by day, the roads
 Were crowded with the bravest youth of France,
 And all the promptest of her spirits, linked
 In gallant soldiership, and posting on
 To meet the war upon her frontier bounds.
 Yet at this very moment do tears start
 Into mine eyes : I do not say I weep—
 I wept not then,—but tears have dimmed my sight,
 In memory of the farewells of that time,
 Domestic severings, female fortitude
 At dearest separation, patriot love
 And self-devotion, and terrestrial hope,
 Encouraged with a martyr's confidence ;
 Even files of strangers merely seen but once,
 And for a moment, men from far with sound
 Of music, martial tunes, and banners spread,
 Entering the city, here and there a face,
 Or person singled out among the rest,
 Yet still a stranger and beloved as such ;
 Even by these passing spectacles my heart
 Was oftentimes uplifted, and they seemed
 Arguments sent from Heaven to prove the cause
 Good, pure, which no one could stand up against,
 Who was not lost, abandoned, selfish, proud,
 Mean, miserable, wilfully depraved,
 Hater perverse of equity and truth.

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Among that band of Officers was one,
 Already hinted at, of other mould—

A patriot, thence rejected by the rest,
And with an oriental loathing spurned,
As of a different caste. A meeker man
Than this lived never, nor a more benign,
Meek though enthusiastic. Injuries
Made *him* more gracious, and his nature then
Did breathe its sweetness out most sensibly,
As aromatic flowers on Alpine turf,
When foot hath crushed them. He through the events
Of that great change wandered in perfect faith,
As through a book, an old romance, or tale
Of Fairy, or some dream of actions wrought
Behind the summer clouds. By birth he ranked
With the most noble; but unto the poor
Among mankind he was in service bound,
As by some tie invisible, oaths professed
To a religious order. Man he loved
As man; and, to the mean and the obscure
And all the homely in their homely works,
Transferred a courtesy which had no air
Of condescension; but did rather seem
A passion and a gallantry, like that
Which he, a soldier, in his idler day
Had paid to woman: somewhat vain he was
Or seemed so, yet it was not vanity,
But fondness, and a kind of radiant joy
Diffused around him, while he was intent
On works of love or freedom, or revolved
Complacently the progress of a cause,
Whereof he was a part: yet this was meek
And placid, and took nothing from the man
That was delightful. Oft in solitude
With him did I discourse about the end
Of civil government, and its wisest forms;
Of ancient loyalty, and chartered rights,
Custom and habit, novelty and change;

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Of self-respect, and virtue in the few
 For patrimonial honour set apart,
 And ignorance in the labouring multitude.
 For he, to all intolerance indisposed,
 Balanced these contemplations in his mind ;
 And I, who at that time was scarcely dipped
 Into the turmoil, bore a sounder judgment
 Than later days allowed ; carried about me,
 With less alloy to its integrity,
 The experience of past ages, as, through help
 Of books and common life, it makes sure way
 To youthful minds, by objects over near
 Not pressed upon, nor dazzled or misled
 By struggling with the crowd for present ends.

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Oh, sweet it is, in academic groves,
 Or such retirement, Friend ! as we have known
 In the green dales beside our Rotha's stream,
 Greta, or Derwent, or some nameless rill,
 To ruminare, with interchange of talk,
 On rational liberty, and hope in man,
 Justice and peace. But far more sweet such toil—
 Toil, say I, for it leads to thoughts abstruse—
 If nature then be standing on the brink
 Of some great trial, and we hear the voice
 Of one devoted,—one whom circumstance
 Hath called upon to embody his deep sense
 In action, give it outwardly a shape,
 And that of benediction, to the world.
 Then doubt is not, and truth is more than truth,—
 A hope it is, and a desire ; a creed
 Of zeal, by an authority Divine
 Sanctioned, of danger, difficulty, or death.
 Such conversation, under Attic shades,
 Did Dion hold with Plato ; ripened thus
 For a Deliverer's glorious task,—and such

He, on that ministry already bound,
 Held with Eudemus and Timonides,
 Surrounded by adventurers in arms,
 When those two vessels with their daring freight,
 For the Sicilian Tyrant's overthrow,
 Sailed from Zacynthus,—philosophic war,
 Led by Philosophers. With harder fate,
 Though like ambition, such was he, O Friend !
 Of whom I speak. So BEAUPUY (let the name
 Stand near the worthiest of Antiquity)
 Fashioned his life ; and many a long discourse,
 With like persuasion honoured, we maintained :
 He, on his part, accoutred for the worst,
 He perished fighting, in supreme command,
 Upon the borders of the unhappy Loire,
 For liberty, against deluded men,
 His fellow country-men ; and yet most blessed
 In this, that he the fate of later times
 Lived not to see, nor what we now behold,
 Who have as ardent hearts as he had then.

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The Revolutionary cause.

(ll. 509-532.)

When we chanced
 One day to meet a hunger-bitten girl,
 Who crept along fitting her languid gait
 Unto a heifer's motion, by a cord
 Tied to her arm, and picking thus from the lane
 Its sustenance, while the girl with pallid hands
 Was busy knitting in a heartless mood
 Of solitude, and at the sight my friend
 In agitation said, " 'Tis against *that*
 That we are fighting," I with him believed
 That a benignant spirit was abroad

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Which might not be withheld, that poverty
 Abject as this would in a little time
 Be found no more, that we should see the earth
 Unthwarted in her wish to recompense
 The meek, the lowly, patient child of toil,
 All institutes for ever blotted out
 That legalised exclusion, empty pomp
 Abolished, sensual state and cruel power,
 Whether by edict of the one or few ;
 And finally, as sum and crown of all,
 Should see the people having a strong hand
 In framing their own laws ; whence better days
 To all mankind.

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BOOK X.—RESIDENCE IN FRANCE—(*continued*).*The poet leaves Paris. A check to the invaders of France.*

(ll. 1-30.)

It was a beautiful and silent day
 That overspread the countenance of earth,
 Then fading with unusual quietness,—
 A day as beautiful as e'er was given
 To soothe regret, though deepening what it soothed,
 When by the gliding Loire I paused, and cast
 Upon his rich domains, vineyard and tilth,
 Green meadow-ground, and many-coloured woods,
 Again, and yet again, a farewell look ;
 Then from the quiet of that scene passed on,
 Bound to the fierce Metropolis. From his throne
 The King had fallen, and that invading host—
 Presumptuous cloud, on whose black front was written
 The tender mercies of the dismal wind
 That bore it—on the plains of Liberty

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Had burst innocuous. Say in bolder words,
 They—who had come elate as eastern hunters
 Banded beneath the Great Mogul, when he
 Erewhile went forth from Agra or Lahore,
 Rajahs and Omrahs in his train, intent
 To drive their prey enclosed within a ring
 Wide as a province, but, the signal given,
 Before the point of the life-threatening spear
 Narrowing itself by moments—they, rash men,
 Had seen the anticipated quarry turned
 Into avengers, from whose wrath they fled
 In terror. Disappointment and dismay
 Remained for all whose fancies had run wild
 With evil expectations ; confidence
 And perfect triumph for the better cause.

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Wordsworth returns to Paris. The tragedy of the September massacres broods over the city.

(ll. 48 93.)

Cheered with this hope, to Paris I returned,
 And ranged, with ardour heretofore unfelt,
 The spacious city, and in progress passed
 The prison where the unhappy Monarch lay,
 Associate with his children and his wife
 In bondage ; and the palace, lately stormed
 With roar of cannon by a furious host.
 I crossed the square (an empty area then !)
 Of the Carrousel, where so late had lain
 The dead, upon the dying heaped, and gazed
 On this and other spots, as doth a man
 Upon a volume whose contents he knows
 Are memorable, but from him locked up,
 Being written in a tongue he cannot read,
 So that he questions the mute leaves with pain,

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And half upbraids their silence. But that night
I felt most deeply in what world I was,
What ground I trod on, and what air I breathed.
High was my room and lonely, near the roof
Of a large mansion or hotel, a lodge
That would have pleased me in more quiet times ;
Nor was it wholly without pleasure then.
With unextinguished taper, I kept watch,
Reading at intervals ; the fear gone by
Pressed on me almost like a fear to come.
I thought of those September massacres,
Divided from me by one little month,
Saw them and touched : the rest was conjured up
From tragic fictions or true history,
Remembrances and dim admonishments.
The horse is taught his manage, and no star
Of wildest course but treads back his own steps ;
For the spent hurricane the air provides
As fierce a successor ; the tide retreats
But to return out of its hiding-place
In the great deep ; all things have second birth ;
The earthquake is not satisfied at once ;
And in this way I wrought upon myself,
Until I seemed to hear a voice that cried,
To the whole city, "Sleep no more." The trance
Fled with the voice to which it had given birth ;
But vainly comments of a calmer mind
Promised soft peace and sweet forgetfulness.
The place, all hushed and silent as it was,
Appeared unfit for the repose of night,
Defenceless as a wood where tigers roam.

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Wordsworth returns to England. He regards with horror and indignation the declaration of war against France:

(ll. 236-299.)

Twice had the trees let fall
 Their leaves, as often Winter had put on
 His hoary crown, since I had seen the surge
 Beat against Albion's shore, since ear of mine
 Had caught the accents of my native speech
 Upon our native country's sacred ground.
 A patriot of the world, how could I glide
 Into communion with her sylvan shades,
 Erewhile my tuneful haunt ? It pleased me more
 To abide in the great City, where I found 10
 The general air still busy with the stir
 Of that first memorable onset made
 By a strong levy of humanity
 Upon the traffickers in Negro blood ;
 Effort which, though defeated, had recalled
 To notice old forgotten principles,
 And through the nation spread a novel heat
 Of virtuous feeling. For myself, I own
 That this particular strife had wanted power
 To rivet my affections ; nor did now 20
 Its unsuccessful issue much excite
 My sorrow ; for I brought with me the faith
 That, if France prospered, good men would not long
 Pay fruitless worship to humanity,
 And this most rotten branch of human shame,
 Object, so seemed it, of superfluous pains,
 Would fall together with its parent tree.
 What, then, were my emotions, when in arms
 Britain put forth her freeborn strength in league,
 Oh, pity and shame ! with those confederate Powers ! 30
 Not in my single self alone I found,

But in the minds of all ingenuous youth,
Change and subversion from that hour. No shock
Given to my moral nature had I known
Down to that very moment ; neither lapse
Nor turn of sentiment that might be named
A revolution, save at this one time ;
All else was progress on the self-same path
On which, with a diversity of pace,
I had been travelling : this a stride at once
Into another region. As a light
And pliant harebell, swinging in the breeze
On some grey rock—its birthplace—so had I
Wantoned, fast rooted on the ancient tower
Of my beloved country, wishing not
A happier fortune than to wither there :
Now was I from that pleasant station torn
And tossed about in whirlwind. I rejoiced,
Yea, afterwards—truth most painful to record !—
Exulted, in the triumph of my soul,
When Englishmen by thousands were o'erthrown,
Left without glory on the field, or driven,
Brave hearts ! to shameful flight. It was a grief,—
Grief call it not, 'twas anything but that,—
A conflict of sensations without name,
Of which *he* only, who may love the sight
Of a village steeple, as I do, can judge,
When, in the congregation bending all
To their great Father, prayers were offered up,
Or praises for our country's victories ;
And, 'mid the simple worshippers, perchance
I only, like an uninvited guest
Whom no one owned, sate silent, shall I add,
Fed on the day of vengeance yet to come.

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The poet's last hopes for the Revolution are destroyed by news of the Reign of Terror.

(ll. 356-415.)

Domestic carnage now filled the whole year
 With feast-days ; old men from the chimney-nook,
 The maiden from the bosom of her love,
 The mother from the cradle of her babe,
 The warrior from the field—all perished, all—
 Friends, enemies, of all parties, ages, ranks,
 Head after head, and never heads enough
 For those that bade them fall. They found their joy,
 They made it proudly, eager as a child,
 (If like desires of innocent little ones
 May with such heinous appetites be compared),
 Pleased in some open field to exercise
 A toy that mimics with revolving wings
 The motion of a wind-mill ; though the air
 Do of itself blow fresh, and make the vanes
 Spin in his eyesight, *that* contents him not,
 But, with the plaything at arm's length, he sets
 His front against the blast, and runs amain,
 That it may whirl the faster.

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Amid the depth
 Of those enormities, even thinking minds
 Forgot, at seasons, whence they had their being ;
 Forgot that such a sound was ever heard
 As Liberty upon earth : yet all beneath
 Her innocent authority was wrought,
 Nor could have been, without her blessed name.
 The illustrious wife of Roland, in the hour
 Of her composure, felt that agony,
 And gave it vent in her last words. O Friend !
 It was a lamentable time for man,
 Whether a hope had e'er been his or not ;

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A woeful time for them whose hopes survived
 The shock ; most woeful for those few who still
 Were flattered, and had trust in human kind :
 They had the deepest feeling of the grief.
 Meanwhile the Invaders fared as they deserved :
 The Herculean Commonwealth had put forth her arms,
 And throttled with an infant godhead's might
 The snakes about her cradle ; that was well,
 And as it should be ; yet no cure for them
 Whose souls were sick with pain of what would be 40
 Hereafter brought in charge against mankind.
 Most melancholy at that time, O Friend !
 Were my day-thoughts,—my nights were miserable ;
 Through months, through years, long after the last beat
 Of those atrocities, the hour of sleep
 To me came rarely charged with natural gifts,
 Such ghastly visions had I of despair
 And tyranny, and implements of death ;
 And innocent victims sinking under fear,
 And momentary hope, and worn-out prayer. 50
 Each in his separate cell, or penned in crowds
 For sacrifice, and struggling with fond mirth
 And levity in dungeons, where the dust
 Was laid with tears. Then suddenly the scene
 Changed, and the unbroken dream entangled me
 In long orations, which I strove to plead
 Before unjust tribunals,—with a voice
 Labouring, a brain confounded, and a sense,
 Death-like, of treacherous desertion, felt
 In the last place of refuge—my own soul. 60

The poet visits his schoolmaster's grave. “Robespierre is dead.”

(ll. 511-603.)

O Friend ! few happier moments have been mine
 Than that which told the downfall of this Tribe

So dreaded, so abhorred. The day deserves
A separate record. Over the smooth sands
Of Lever's ample estuary lay
My journey, and beneath a genial sun,
With distant prospect among gleams of sky
And clouds, and intermingling mountain-tops,
In one inseparable glory clad,
Creatures of one ethereal substance met
In consistory, like a diadem
Or crown of burning seraphs as they sit
In the empyrean. Underneath that pomp
Celestial, lay unseen the pastoral vales
Among whose happy fields I had grown up
From childhood. On the fulgent spectacle,
That neither passed away nor changed, I gazed
Enrapt ; but brightest things are wont to draw
Sad opposites out of the inner heart,
As even their pensive influence drew from mine.
How could it otherwise ? for not in vain
That very morning had I turned aside
To seek the ground where, 'mid a throng of graves,
An honoured teacher of my youth was laid,
And on the stone were graven by his desire
Lines from the churchyard elegy of Gray.
This faithful guide, speaking from his death-bed,
Added no farewell to his parting counsel,
But said to me " My head will soon lie low " ;
And when I saw the turf that covered him,
After the lapse of full eight years, those words,
With sound of voice and countenance of the Man,
Came back upon me, so that some few tears
Fell from me in my own despite. But now
I thought, still traversing that widespread plain,
With tender pleasure of the verses graven
Upon his tombstone, whispering to myself :
He loved the Poets, and, if now alive,

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Would have loved me, as one not destitute
 Of promise, nor belying the kind hope
 That he had formed, when I, at his command.
 Began to spin, with toil, my earliest songs.

40

As I advanced, all that I saw or felt
 Was gentleness and peace. Upon a small
 And rocky island near, a fragment stood
 (Itself like a sea rock) the low remains
 (With shells encrusted, dark with briny weeds)
 Of a dilapidated structure, once
 A Romish chapel, where the vested priest
 Said matins at the hour that suited those
 Who crossed the sands with ebb of morning tide.
 Not far from that still ruin all the plain
 Lay spotted with a variegated crowd
 Of vehicles and travellers, horse and foot,
 Wading beneath the conduct of their guide
 In loose procession through the shallow stream
 Of inland waters ; the great sea meanwhile
 Heaved at safe distance, far retired. I paused,
 Longing for skill to paint a scene so bright
 And cheerful, but the foremost of the band
 As he approached, no salutation given
 In the familiar language of the day ,
 Cried “ Robespierre is dead ! ”—nor was a doubt,
 After strict question, left within my mind
 That he and his supporters all were fallen.

50

60

Great was my transport, deep my gratitude
 To everlasting Justice, by this fiat
 Made manifest. “ Come now, ye golden times,”
 Said I forth-pouring on those open sands
 A hymn of triumph : “ as the morning comes
 From out the bosom of the night, come ye :
 Thus far our trust is verified ; behold !

70

They who with clumsy desperation brought
A river of Blood, and preached that nothing else
Could cleanse the Augean stable, by the might
Of their own helper have been swept away ;
Their madness stands declared and visible ;
Elsewhere will safety now be sought, and earth
March firmly towards righteousness and peace."—
Then schemes I framed more calmly, when and how 80
The madding factions might be tranquillised,
And how through hardships manifold and long
The glorious renovation would proceed.
Thus interrupted by uneasy bursts
Of exultation, I pursued my way
Along that very shore which I had skimmed
In former days, when—spurring from the Vale
Of Nightshade, and St. Mary's mouldering fane,
And the stone abbot, after circuit made
In wantonness of heart, a joyous band 90
Of schoolboys hastening to their distant home
Along the margin of the moonlight sea—
We beat with thundering hoofs the level sand.

BOOK XI.—FRANCE

A retrospect of hopes and fears. Faith in pure Reason.

(ll. 105-258.)

O pleasant exercise of hope and joy !
For mighty were the auxiliars which then stood
Upon our side, us who were strong in love !
Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very Heaven ! O times,
In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
Of custom, law, and statute, took at once

The attraction of a country in romance !

When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights

When most intent on making of herself

10

A prime enchantress—to assist the work,

Which then was going forward in her name !

Not favoured spots alone, but the whole Earth,

The beauty wore of promise—that which sets

(As at some moments might not be unfelt

Among the bowers of Paradise itself)

The budding rose above the rose full blown.

What temper at the prospect did not wake

To happiness unthought of ? The inert

Were roused, and lively natures rapt away !

20

They who had fed their childhood upon dreams,

The play-fellows of fancy, who had made

All powers of swiftness, subtilty, and strength

Their ministers,—who in lordly wise had stirred

Among the grandest objects of the sense,

And dealt with whatsoever they found there

As if they had within some lurking right

To wield it ;—they, too, who of gentle mood

Had watched all gentle motions, and to these

Had fitted their own thoughts, schemers more mild,

30

And in the region of their peaceful selves ;—

Now was it that *both* found, the meek and lofty

Did both find, helpers to their hearts' desire,

And stuff at hand, plastic as they could wish,—

Were called upon to exercise their skill,

Not in Utopia,—subterranean fields,—

Or some secreted island, Heaven knows where !

But in the very world, which is the world

Of all of us,—the place where, in the end,

We find our happiness, or not at all !

40

Why should I not confess that Earth was then

To me, what an inheritance, new-fallen,

Seems, when the first time visited, to one
 Who thither comes to find in it his home ?
 He walks about and looks upon the spot
 With cordial transport, moulds it and remoulas
 And is half pleased with things that are amiss.
 'Twill be such joy to see them disappear.

An active partisan, I thus convoked
 From every object pleasant circumstance 50
 To suit my ends ; I moved among mankind
 With genial feelings still predominant ;
 When erring, erring on the better part,
 And in the kinder spirit ; placable,
 Indulgent, as not uninformed that men
 See as they have been taught—Antiquity
 Gives rights to error ; and aware, no less,
 That throwing off oppression must be work
 As well of License as of Liberty ;
 And above all—for this was more than all— 60
 Not caring if the wind did now and then
 Blow keen upon an eminence that gave
 Prospect so large into futurity ;
 In brief, a child of Nature, as at first,
 Diffusing only those affections wider
 That from the cradle had grown up with me,
 And losing, in no other way than light
 Is lost in light, the weak in the more strong.

In the main outline, such it might be said
 Was my condition, till with open war 70
 Britain opposed the liberties of France.
 This threw me first out of the pale of love ;
 Soured and corrupted, upwards to the source,
 My sentiments ; was not, as hitherto,
 A swallowing up of lesser things in great,
 But change of them into their contraries ;

And thus a way was opened for mistakes
 And false conclusions, in degree as gross,
 In kind more dangerous. What had been a pride,
 Was now a shame ; my likings and my loves
 Ran in new channels, leaving old ones dry ;
 And hence a blow that, in maturer age,
 Would but have touched the judgment, struck more deep
 Into sensations near the heart : meantime,
 As from the first, wild theories were afloat,
 To whose pretensions, sedulously urged,
 I had but lent a careless ear, assured
 That time was ready to set all things right,
 And that the multitude, so long oppressed,
 Would be oppressed no more.

80

But when events

90

Brought less encouragement, and unto these
 The immediate proof of principles no more
 Could be entrusted, while the events themselves,
 Worn out in greatness, stripped of novelty,
 Less occupied the mind, and sentiments
 Could through my understanding's natural growth
 No longer keep their ground, by faith maintained
 Of inward consciousness, and hope that laid
 Her hand upon her object—evidence
 Safer, of universal application, such
 As could not be impeached, was sought elsewhere.

100

But now, become oppressors in their turn,
 Frenchmen had changed a war of self-defence
 For one of conquest, losing sight of all
 Which they had struggled for : up mounted now,
 Openly in the eye of earth and heaven,
 The scale of liberty. I read her doom,
 With anger vexed, with disappointment sore,
 But not dismayed, nor taking to the shame
 Of a false prophet. While resentment rose

110

Striving to hide, what nought could heal, the wounds
 Of mortified presumption, I adhered
 More firmly to old tenets, and, to prove
 Their temper, strained them more ; and thus, in heat
 Of contest, did opinions every day
 Grow into consequence, till round my mind
 They clung, as if they were its life, nay more,
 The very being of the immortal soul.

This was the time, when, all things tending fast
 To deprivation, speculative schemes—

120

That promised to abstract the hopes of Man
 Out of his feelings, to be fixed thenceforth
 For ever in a purer element—

Found ready welcome. Tempting region *that*
 For Zeal to enter and refresh herself,
 Where passions had the privilege to work,
 And never hear the sound of their own names.

But, speaking more in charity, the dream
 Flattered the young, pleased with extremes, nor least
 With that which makes our Reason's naked self

130

The object of its fervour. What delight !

How glorious ! in self-knowledge and self-rule,
 To look through all the frailties of the world,
 And, with a resolute mastery shaking off
 Infirmities of nature, time, and place,

Build social upon personal Liberty,

Which, to the blind restraints of general laws
 Superior, magisterially adopts

One guide, the light of circumstances, flashed
 Upon an independent intellect.

140

Thus expectation rose again ; thus hope,
 From her first ground expelled, grew proud once more.
 Oft, as my thoughts were turned to human kind,
 I scorned indifference ; but, inflamed with thirst
 Of a secure intelligence, and sick

Of other longing, I pursued what seemed
 A more exalted nature ; wished that Man
 Should start out of his earthy, worm-like state,
 And spread abroad the wings of Liberty,
 Lord of himself. in undisturbed delight—

150

A noble aspiration ! *yet* I feel
 (Sustained by worthier as by wiser thoughts)
 The aspiration, nor shall ever cease
 To feel it.

Fruitless speculations and consequent despair.

(ll. 270-305.)

A strong shock

Was given to old opinions ; all men's minds
 Had felt its power, and mine was both let loose,
 Let loose and goaded. After what hath been
 Already said of patriotic love,
 Suffice it here to add, that, somewhat stern
 In temperament, withal a happy man,
 And therefore bold to look on painful things,
 Free likewise of the world, and thence more bold,
 I summoned my best skill, and toiled, intent
 To anatomise the frame of social life ;
 Yea, the whole body of society

10

Searched to its heart. Share with me, Friend ! the wish
 That some dramatic tale, endued with shapes
 Livelier, and flinging out less guarded words
 Than suit the work we fashion, might set forth
 What then I learned, or think I learned, of truth,
 And the errors into which I fell, betrayed
 By present objects, and by reasonings false
 From their beginnings, inasmuch as drawn
 Out of a heart that had been turned aside
 From Nature's way by outward accidents,

20

And which was thus confounded, more and more
 Misguided, and misguiding. So I fared,
 Dragging all precepts, judgments, maxims, creeds,
 Like culprits to the bar ; calling the mind,
 Suspiciously, to establish in plain day
 Her titles and her honours ; now believing,
 Now disbelieving ; endlessly perplexed
 With impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground
 Of obligation, what the rule and whence,
 The sanction ; till, demanding formal *proof*,
 And seeking it in everything, I lost
 All feeling of conviction, and, in fine,
 Sick, wearied out with contrarieties,
 Yielded up moral questions in despair.

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BOOK XII.—IMAGINATION AND TASTE, HOW IMPAIRED AND RESTORED.

The true path for the poet—not aloofness but love.

(ll. 93-121.)

O Soul of Nature ! excellent and fair !
 That didst rejoice with me, with whom I, too,
 Rejoiced through early youth, before the winds
 And roaring waters, and in lights and shades
 That marched and countermarched about the hills
 In glorious apparition, Powers on whom
 I daily waited, now all eye and now
 All ear ; but never long without the heart
 Employed, and man's unfolding intellect :
 O Soul of Nature ! that, by laws divine
 Sustained and governed, still dost overflow
 With an impassioned life, what feeble ones
 Walk on this earth ! how feeble have I been

10

When thou wert in thy strength ! Nor this through stroke
 Of human suffering, such as justifies
 Remissness and inaptitude of mind,
 But through presumption ; even in pleasure pleased
 Unworthily, disliking here, and there
 Liking ; by rules of mimic art transferred
 To things above all art ; but more,—for this, 20
 Although a strong infection of the age,
 Was never much my habit—giving way
 To a comparison of scene with scene,
 Bent overmuch on superficial things,
 Pampering myself with meagre novelties
 Of colour and proportion ; to the moods
 Of time and season, to the moral power,
 The affections and the spirit of the place.
 Insensible.

Mary Hutchinson.

(ll. 151-173.)

And yet I knew a maid,
 A young enthusiast, who escaped these bonds ;
 Her eye was not the mistress of her heart ;
 Far less did rules prescribed by passive taste.
 Or barren intermeddling subtleties,
 Perplex her mind ; but, wise as women are
 When genial circumstance hath favoured them,
 She welcomed what was given, and craved no more.
 Whate'er the scene presented to her view,
 That was the best, to that she was attuned
 By her benign simplicity of life,
 And through a perfect happiness of soul,
 Whose variegated feelings were in this
 Sisters, that they were each some new delight.
 Birds in the bower, and lambs in the green field,
 Could they have known her, would have loved ; methought 10

Her very presence such a sweetness breathed,
 That flowers, and trees, and even the silent hills,
 And everything she looked on, should have had
 An intimation how she bore herself
 Towards them and to all creatures. God delights
 In such a being ; for, her common thoughts
 Are piety, her life is gratitude.

20

Feeling comes in aid of feeling. The emotions of the child save the man from insensibility.

(ll. 225-335.)

I remember well,
 That once, while yet my inexperienced hand
 Could scarcely hold a bridle, with proud hopes
 I mounted, and we journeyed towards the hills :
 An ancient servant of my father's house
 Was with me, my encourager and guide :
 We had not travelled long, ere some mischance
 Disjoined me from my comrade ; and, through fear
 Dismounting, down the rough and stony moor
 I led my horse, and, stumbling on, at length
 Came to a bottom, where in former times
 A murderer had been hung in iron chains.
 The gibbet-mast had mouldered down, the bones
 And iron case were gone ; but on the turf,
 Hard by, soon after that fell deed was wrought,
 Some unknown hand had carved the murderer's name.
 The monumental letters were inscribed
 In times long past ; but still, from year to year,
 By superstition of the neighbourhood,
 The grass is cleared away, and to this hour
 The characters are fresh and visible :
 A casual glance had shown them, and I fled,
 Faltering and faint, and ignorant of the road :

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Then, reascending the bare common, saw
 A naked pool that lay beneath the hills,
 The beacon on the summit, and, more near,
 A girl, who bore a pitcher on her head,
 And seemed with difficult steps to force her way
 Against the blowing wind. It was, in truth,
 An ordinary sight ; but I should need
 Colours and words that are unknown to man,
 To paint the visionary dreariness
 Which, while I looked all round for my lost guide,
 Invested moorland waste, and naked pool,
 The beacon crowning the lone eminence,
 The female and her garments vexed and tossed
 By the strong wind. When, in the blessed ho-
 Of early love, the loved one at my side,
 I roamed, in daily presence of this scene,
 Upon the naked pool and dreary crags,
 And on the melancholy beacon, fell
 A spirit of pleasure and youth's golden gleam ;
 And think ye not with radiance more sublime
 For these remembrances, and for the power
 They had left behind ? So feeling comes in aid
 Of feeling, and diversity of strength
 Attends us, if but once we have been strong.
 Oh ! mystery of man, from what a depth
 Proceed thy honours ! I am lost, but see
 In simple childhood something of the base
 On which thy greatness stands ; but this I feel,
 That from thyself it comes, that thou must give,
 Else never canst receive. The days gone by
 Return upon me almost from the dawn
 Of life : the hiding-places of man's power
 Open ; I would approach them, but they close.
 I see by glimpses now ; when age comes on,
 May scarcely see at all ; and I would give,
 While yet we may, as far as words can give,

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Substance and life to what I feel, enshrining,
Such is my hope, the spirit of the Past
For future restoration.—Yet another
Of these memorials :—

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One Christmas-time,
On the glad eve of its dear holidays,
Feverish, and tired, and restless, I went forth
Into the fields, impatient for the sight
Of those led palfreys that should bear us home,
My brothers and myself. There rose a crag,
That, from the meeting-point of two highways
Ascending, overlooked them both, far stretched ;
Thither, uncertain on which road to fix
My expectation, thither I repaired,
Scout-like, and gained the summit ; 'twas a day
Tempestuous, dark, and wild, and on the grass
I sate half-sheltered by a naked wall ;
Upon my right hand couched a single sheep,
Upon my left a blasted hawthorn stood ;
With those companions at my side, I watched,
Straining my eyes intensely, as the mist
Gave intermitting prospect of the copse
And plain beneath. Ere we to school returned,—
That dreary time,—ere we had been ten days
Sojourners in my father's house, he died,
And I and my three brothers, orphans then,
Followed his body to the grave. The event,
With all the sorrow that it brought, appeared
A chastisement ; and when I called to mind
That day so lately past, when from the crag
I looked in such anxiety of hope,
With trite reflections of morality,
Yet in the deepest passion, I bowed low
To God, Who thus corrected my desires ;
And, afterwards, the wind and sleety rain,
And all the business of the elements,

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The single sheep, and the one blasted tree,
 And the bleak music from that old stone wall,
 The noise of wood and water, and the mist
 That on the line of each of those two roads
 Advanced in such indisputable shapes ;
 All these were kindred spectacles and sounds 100
 To which I oft repaired, and thence would drink,
 As at a fountain ; and on winter nights,
 Down to this very time, when storm and rain
 Beat on my roof, or, haply, at noon-day,
 While in a grove I walk, whose lofty trees,
 Laden with summer's thickest foliage, rock
 In a strong wind, some working of the spirit,
 Some inward agitations thence are brought,
 Whate'er their office, whether to beguile 110
 Thoughts over busy in the course they took,
 Or animate an hour of vacant ease.

BOOK XIII.—IMAGINATION AND TASTE, HOW IMPAIRED AND RESTORED.

“The depth of human souls.”

(ll. 142-205.)

Who doth not love to follow with his eye
 The windings of a public way ? the sight,
 Familiar object as it is, hath wrought
 On my imagination since the morn
 Of childhood, when a disappearing line,
 One daily present to my eyes, that crossed
 The naked summit of a far-off hill
 Beyond the limits that my feet had trod,
 Was like an invitation into space 10
 Boundless, or guide into eternity.
 Yes, something of the grandeur which invests

The mariner who sails the roaring sea
Through storm and darkness, early in my mind
Surrounded, too, the wanderers of the earth ;
Grandeur as much, and loveliness far more.
Awed have I been by strolling Bedlamites ;
From many other uncouth vagrants (passed
In fear) have walked with quicker step ; but why
Take note of this ? When I began to enquire,
To watch and question those I met, and speak
Without reserve to them, the lonely roads
Were open schools in which I daily read
With most delight the passions of mankind,
Whether by words, looks, sighs, or tears, revealed ;
There saw into the depth of human souls,
Souls that appear to have no depth at all
To careless eyes. And—now convinced at heart
How little those formalities, to which
With overweening trust alone we give
The name of Education, have to do
With real feeling and just sense ; how vain
A correspondence with the talking world
Proves to the most ; and called to make good search
If man's estate, by doom of Nature yoked
With toil, be therefore yoked with ignorance ;
If virtue be indeed so hard to rear,
And intellectual strength so rare a boon—
I prized such walks still more, for there I found
Hope to my hope, and to my pleasure peace
And steadiness, and healing and repose
To every angry passion. There I heard,
From mouths of men obscure and lowly, truths
Replete with honour ; sounds in unison
With loftiest promises of good and fair.

There are who think that strong affection, love
Known by whatever name, is falsely deemed

A gift, to use a term which they would use,
 Of vulgar nature ; that its growth requires
 Retirement, leisure, language purified
 By manners studied and elaborate ;
 That whoso feels such passion in its strength
 Must live within the very light and air
 Of courteous usages refined by art.

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True is it, where oppression worse than death
 Salutes the being at his birth, where grace
 Of culture hath been utterly unknown,
 And poverty and labour in excess
 From day to day pre-occupy the ground
 Of the affections, and to Nature's self
 Oppose a deeper nature ; there, indeed,
 Love cannot be ; nor does it thrive with ease
 Among the close and overcrowded haunts
 Of cities, where the human heart is sick,
 And the eye feeds it not, and cannot feed.

60

The poet's theme : "The very heart of man." Human nature is often found at its loftiest among the unregarded and inarticulate.

(ll. 221-278.)

Here, calling up to mind what then I saw,
 A youthful traveller, and see daily now
 In the familiar circuit of my home,
 Here might I pause, and bend in reverence
 To Nature, and the power of human minds,
 To men as they are men within themselves.
 How oft high service is performed within,
 When all the external man is rude in show,—
 Not like a temple rich with pomp and gold,
 But a mere mountain-chapel, that protects
 Its simple worshippers from sun and shower.
 Of these, said I, shall be my song ; of these,

10

If future years mature me for the task,
 Will I record the praises, making verse
 Deal boldly with substantial things ; in truth
 And sanctity of passion, speak of these,
 That justice may be done, obeisance paid
 Where it is due : thus haply shall I teach,
 Inspire ; through unadulterated ears
 Pour rapture, tenderness, and hope,—my theme 20
 No other than the very heart of man,
 As found among the best of those who live—
 Not unexalted by religious faith,
 Nor uninformed by books, good books, though few—
 In Nature's presence : thence may I select
 Sorrow, that is not sorrow, but delight ;
 And miserable love, that is not pain
 To hear of, for the glory that redounds
 Therefrom to human kind, and what we are.
 Be mine to follow with no timid step 30
 Where knowledge leads me : it shall be my pride
 That I have dared to tread this holy ground,
 Speaking no dream, but things oracular ;
 Matter not lightly to be heard by those
 Who to the letter of the outward promise
 Do read the invisible soul ; by men adroit
 In speech, and for communion with the world
 Accomplished ; minds whose faculties are then
 Most active when they are most eloquent,
 And elevated most when most admired. 40
 Men may be found of other mould than these,
 Who are their own upholders, to themselves
 Encouragement, and energy, and will,
 Expressing liveliest thoughts in lively words
 As native passion dictates. Others, too,
 There are among the walks of homely life
 Still higher, men for contemplation framed,
 Shy, and unpractised in the strife of phrase ;

Meek men, whose very souls perhaps would sink
Beneath them, summoned to such intercourse :

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* Theirs is the language of the heavens, the power,
The thought, the image, and the silent joy :
Words are but under-agents in their souls ;
When they are grasping with their greatest strength,
They do not breathe among them : this I speak
In gratitude to God, Who feeds our hearts
For His own service ; knoweth, loveth us,
When we are unregarded by the world.

The imagination as creator.

(ll. 299-349.)

Dearest Friend !

If thou partake the animating faith
That Poets, even as Prophets, each with each
Connected in a mighty scheme of truth,
Have each his own peculiar faculty,
Heaven's gift, a sense that fits him to perceive
Objects unseen before, thou wilt not blame
The humblest of this band who dares to hope
That unto him hath also been vouchsafed
An insight that in some sort he possesses,
A privilege whereby a work of his,
Proceeding from a source of untaught things,
Creative and enduring, may become
A power like one of Nature's. To a hope
Not less ambitious once among the wilds
Of Sarum's Plain, my youthful spirit was raised ;
There, as I ranged at will the pastoral downs
Trackless and smooth, or paced the bare white roads
Lengthening in solitude their dreary line,
Time with his retinue of ages fled
Backwards, nor checked his flight until I saw

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Our dim ancestral Past in vision clear ;
 Saw multitudes of men, and, here and there,
 A single Briton clothed in wolf-skin vest,
 With shield and stone-axe, stride across the wold ;
 The voice of spears was heard, the rattling spear
 Shaken by arms of mighty bone, in strength,
 Long mouldered, of barbaric majesty.

I called on Darkness—but before the word
 Was uttered, midnight darkness seemed to take
 All objects from my sight ; and lo ! again
 The Desert visible by dismal flames ;
 It is the sacrificial altar, fed
 With living men—how deep the groans ! the voice
 Of those that crowd the giant wicker thrills
 The monumental hillocks, and the pomp
 Is for both worlds, the living and the dead.

At other moments—(for through that wide waste
 Three summer days I roamed) where'er the Plain
 Was figured o'er with circles, lines, or mounds,
 That yet survive, a work, as some divine,
 Shaped by the Druids, so to represent
 Their knowledge of the heavens, and image forth
 The constellations—gently was I charmed
 Into a waking dream, a reverie
 That, with believing eyes, where'er I turned,
 Beheld long-bearded teachers, with white wands
 Uplifted, pointing to the starry sky,
 Alternately, and plain below, while breath
 Of music swayed their motions, and the waste
 Rejoiced with them and me in those sweet sounds.

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BOOK XIV.—CONCLUSION.

An ascent of Snowdon by moonlight. An emblem of the human mind in true poetic intercourse with created things.

(ll. 11-111.)

It was a close, warm, breezeless summer night,
 Wan, dull, and glaring, with a dripping fog
 Low-hung and thick that covered all the sky ;
 But, undiscouraged, we began to climb
 The mountain-side. The mist soon girt us round,
 And, after ordinary travellers' talk
 With our conductor, pensively we sank
 Each into commerce with his private thoughts :
 Thus did we breast the ascent, and by myself
 Was nothing either seen or heard that checked
 Those musings or diverted, save that once
 The shepherd's lurcher, who, among the crags,
 Had to his joy unearthed a hedgehog, teased
 His coiled-up prey with barkings turbulent.
 This small adventure, for even such it seemed
 In that wild place and at the dead of night,
 Being over and forgotten, on we wound
 In silence as before. With forehead bent
 Earthward, as if in opposition set
 Against an enemy, I panted up
 With eager pace, and no less eager thoughts.
 Thus might we wear a midnight hour away,
 Ascending at loose distance each from each,
 And I, as chanced, the foremost of the band ;
 When at my feet the ground appeared to brighten.
 And with a step or two seemed brighter still ;
 Nor was time given to ask or learn the cause,
 For instantly a light upon the turf
 Fell like a flash, and lo ! as I looked up,
 The Moon hung naked in a firmament

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Of azure without cloud, and at my feet
 Rested a silent sea of hoary mist.
 A hundred hills their dusky backs upheaved
 All over this still ocean ; and beyond,
 Far, far beyond, the solid vapours stretched,
 In headlands, tongues, and promontory shapes,
 Into the main Atlantic, that appeared
 To dwindle, and give up his majesty,
 Usurped upon far as the sight could reach.
 Not so the ethereal vault ; encroachment none
 Was there, nor loss ; only the inferior stars
 Had disappeared, or shed a fainter light
 In the clear presence of the full-orbed Moon,
 Who, from her sovereign elevation, gazed
 Upon the billowy ocean, as it lay
 All meek and silent, save that through a rift—
 Not distant from the shore whereon we stood,
 A fixed, abysmal, gloomy, breathing-place—
 Mounted the roar of waters, torrents, streams
 Innumerable, roaring with one voice !
 Heard over earth and sea, and, in that hour,
 For so it seemed, felt by the starry heavens.

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When into air had partially dissolved
 That vision, given to spirits of the night
 And three chance human wanderers, in calm thought
 Reflected, it appeared to me the type
 Of a majestic intellect, its acts
 And its possessions, what it has and craves,
 What in itself it is, and would become.
 There I beheld the emblem of a mind
 That feeds upon infinity, that broods
 Over the dark abyss, intent to hear
 Its voices issuing forth to silent light
 In one continuous stream ; a mind sustained
 • By recognitions of transcendent power,

In sense conducting to ideal form,
 In soul of more than mortal privilege.
 One function, above all, of such a mind
 Had Nature shadowed there, by putting forth,
 'Mid circumstances awful and sublime, 70
 That mutual domination which she loves
 To exert upon the face of outward things,
 So moulded, joined, abstracted, so endowed
 With interchangeable supremacy,
 That men, least sensitive, see, hear, perceive,
 And cannot choose but feel. The power, which all
 Acknowledge when thus moved, which Nature thus
 To bodily sense exhibits, is the express
 Resemblance of that glorious faculty
 That higher minds bear with them as their own. 80
 This is the very spirit in which they deal
 With the whole compass of the universe :
 They from their native selves can send abroad
 Kindred mutations ; for themselves create
 A like existence ; and, whene'er it dawns
 Created for them, catch it, or are caught
 By its inevitable mastery,
 Like angels stopped upon the wing by sound
 Of harmony from Heaven's remotest spheres.
 Them the enduring and the transient both 90
 Serve to exalt ; they build up greatest things
 From least suggestions ; ever on the watch,
 Willing to work and to be wrought upon,
 They need not extraordinary calls
 To rouse them ; in a world of life they live,
 By sensible impressions not enthralled,
 But by their quickening impulse made more prompt
 To hold fit converse with the spiritual world,
 And with the generations of mankind
 Spread over time, past, present, and to come,
 Age after age, till Time shall be no more. 100

The soul lives by Love and Fear, but chiefly by Love. The Poet's three Friends.

(ll. 130-301.)

Oh ! who is he that hath this whole life long
Preserved, enlarged, this freedom in himself ?
For this alone is genuine liberty :
Where is the favoured being who hath held
That course unchecked, unerring, and untired,
In one perpetual progress smooth and bright ?—
A humbler destiny have we retraced,
And told of lapse and hesitating choice,
And backward wanderings along thorny ways .
Yet—compassed round by mountain solitudes,
Within whose solemn temple I received
My earliest visitations, careless then
Of what was given me ; and which now I range,
A meditative, oft a suffering man—
Do I declare—in accents which, from truth
Deriving cheerful confidence, shall blend
Their modulation with these vocal streams—
That, whatsoever falls my better mind,
Revolving with the accidents of life,
May have sustained, that, howsoe'er misled
Never did I, in quest of right and wrong,
Tamper with conscience from a private aim ;
Nor was in any public hope the dupe
Of selfish passions ; nor did ever yield
Wilfully to mean cares or low pursuits,
But shrunk with apprehensive jealousy
From every combination which might aid
The tendency, too potent in itself,
Of use and custom to bow down the soul
Under a growing weight of vulgar sense,
And substitute a universe of death
For that which moves with light and life informed,

10

20

80

Actual, divine, and true. To fear and love,
 To love as prime and chief, for there fear ends,
 Be this ascribed ; to early intercourse,
 In presence of sublime or beautiful forms,
 With the adverse principles of pain and joy—
 Evil as one is rashly named by men
 Who know not what they speak. By love subsists
 All lasting grandeur, by pervading love ; 40
 That gone, we are as dust.—Behold the fields
 In balmy spring-time full of rising flowers
 And joyous creatures ; see that pair, the lamb
 And the lamb's mother, and their tender ways
 Shall touch thee to the heart ; thou callest this love,
 And not inaptly so, for love it is,
 Far as it carries thee. In some green bower
 Rest, and be not alone, but have thou there
 The One who is thy choice of all the world :
 There linger, listening, gazing, with delight
 Impassioned, but delight how pitiable ! 50
 Unless this love by a still higher love
 Be hallowed, love that breathes not without awe ;
 Love that adores, but on the knees of prayer,
 By heaven inspired ; that frees from chains the soul,
 Lifted, in union with the purest, best,
 Of earth-born passions, on the wings of praise
 Bearing a tribute to the Almighty's Throne.

This spiritual Love acts not nor can exist
 Without Imagination, which, in truth,
 Is but another name for absolute power
 And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,
 And Reason in her most exalted mood.
 This faculty hath been the feeding source
 Of our long labour : we have traced the stream
 From the blind cavern whence is faintly heard
 Its natal murmur ; followed it to light 60

And open day ; accompanied its course
 Among the ways of Nature, for a time
 Lost sight of it bewildered and engulphed ; 70
 Then given it greeting as it rose once more
 In strength, reflecting from its placid breast
 The works of man and face of human life ;
 And lastly, from its progress have we drawn
 Faith in life endless, the sustaining thought
 Of human Being, Eternity, and God.

Imagination having been our theme,
 So also hath that intellectual Love,
 For they are each in each, and cannot stand
 Dividually.—Here must thou be, O Man ! 80
 Power to thyself ; no Helper hast thou here :
 Here keepest thou in singleness thy state :
 No other can divide with thee this work :
 No secondary hand can intervene
 To fashion this ability ; 'tis thine,
 The prime and vital principle is thine
 In the recesses of thy nature, far
 From any reach of outward fellowship,
 Else is not thine at all. But joy to him,
 Oh, joy to him who here hath sown, hath laid 90
 Here, the foundation of his future years !
 For all that friendship, all that love can do,
 All that a darling countenance can look
 Or dear voice utter, to complete the man,
 Perfect him, made imperfect in himself,
 All shall be his : and he whose soul hath risen
 Up to the height of feeling intellect
 Shall want no humbler tenderness ; his heart
 Be tender as a nursing mother's heart ;
 Of female softness shall his life be full,
 Of humble cares and delicate desires,
 Mild interests and gentlest sympathies. 100

Child of my parents ! Sister of my soul !
 Thanks in sincerest verse have been elsewhere
 Poured out for all the early tenderness
 Which I from thee imbibed : and 'tis most true
 That later seasons owed to thee no less ;
 For, spite of thy sweet influence and the touch
 Of kindred hands that opened out the springs
 Of genial thought in childhood, and in spite
 Of all that unassisted I had marked
 In life or nature of those charms minute
 That win their way into the heart by stealth,
 (Still to the very going-out of youth)
 I too exclusively esteemed *that* love,
 And sought *that* beauty, which, as Milton sings,
 Hath terror in it. Thou didst soften down
 This over-sternness ; but for thee, dear Friend !
 My soul, too reckless of mild grace, had stood
 In her original self too confident,
 Retained too long a countenance severe ;
 A rock with torrents roaring, with the clouds
 Familiar, and a favourite of the stars :
 But thou didst plant its crevices with flowers,
 Hang it with shrubs that twinkle in the breeze,
 And teach the little birds to build their nests
 And warble in its chambers. At a time
 When Nature, destined to remain so long
 Foremost in my affections, had fallen back
 Into a second place, pleased to become
 A handmaid to a nobler than herself,
 When every day brought with it some new sense
 Of exquisite regard for common things,
 And all the earth was budding with these gifts
 Of more refined humanity, thy breath,
 Dear Sister ! was a kind of gentler spring
 That went before my steps. Thereafter came
 One whom with thee friendship had early paired ;

110

120

130

She came, no more a phantom to adorn
 A moment, but an inmate of the heart,
 And yet a spirit, there for me enshrined
 To penetrate the lofty and the low ;
 Even as one essence of pervading light
 Shines, in the brightest of ten thousand stars,
 And the meek worm that feeds her lonely lamp
 Couched in the dewy grass.

140

With such a theme,
 Coleridge ! with this my argument, of thee
 Shall I be silent ? O capacious Soul !
 Placed on this earth to love and understand,
 And from thy presence shed the light of love,
 Shall I be mute, ere thou be spoken of ?
 Thy kindred influence to my heart of hearts
 Did also find its way. Thus fear relaxed
 Her overweening grasp ; thus thoughts and things
 In the self-haunting spirit learned to take
 More rational proportions ; mystery,
 The incumbent mystery of sense and soul,
 Of life and death, time and eternity,
 Admitted more habitually a mild
 Interposition—a serene delight

150

In closer gathering cares, such as become
 A human creature, howsoe'er endowed,
 Poet, or destined for a humbler name ;
 And so the deep enthusiastic joy,
 The rapture of the hallelujah sent
 From all that breathes and is, was chastened, stemmed
 And balanced by pathetic truth, by trust
 In hopeful reason, leaning on the stay
 Of Providence ; and in reverence for duty,
 Here, if need be, struggling with storms, and there
 Strewing in peace life's humblest ground with herbs,
 At every season green, sweet at all hours.

160

170

Recollections of Coleridge and the Lyrical Ballads. The two poets remain united in upholding their common ideals.

(ll. 388-454.)

Whether to me shall be allotted life,
 And, with life, power to accomplish aught of worth,
 That will be deemed no insufficient plea
 For having given the story of myself,
 Is all uncertain : but, beloved Friend !
 When, looking back, thou seest, in clearer view
 Than any liveliest sight of yesterday,
 That summer, under whose indulgent skies,
 Upon smooth Quantock's airy ridge we roved
 Unchecked, or loitered 'mid her sylvan combs,
 Thou in bewitching words, with happy heart,
 Didst chaunt the vision of that Ancient Man,
 The bright-eyed Mariner, and rueful woes
 Didst utter of the Lady Christabel ;
 And I, associate with such labour, steeped
 In soft forgetfulness the livelong hours,
 Murmuring of him who, joyous hap, was found,
 After the perils of his moonlight ride,
 Near the loud waterfall ; or her who sate
 In misery near the miserable Thorn ;—
 When thou dost to that summer turn thy thoughts,
 And hast before thee all which then we were,
 To thee, in memory of that happiness,
 It will be known, by thee at least, my Friend :
 Felt, that the history of a Poet's mind
 Is labour not unworthy of regard :
 To thee the work shall justify itself.

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Oh ! yet a few short years of useful life,
 And all will be complete, thy race be run,
 Thy monument of glory will be raised ;

30

Then, though (too weak to tread the ways of truth)
This age fall back to old idolatry,
Though men return to servitude as fast
As the tide ebbs, to ignominy and shame
By nations sink together, we shall still
Find solace—knowing what we have learnt to know,
Rich in true happiness if allowed to be
Faithful alike in forwarding a day
Of firmer trust, join labourers in the work
(Should Providence such grace to us vouchsafe) 40
Of their deliverance, surely yet to come.
Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak
A lasting inspiration, sanctified
By reason, blest by faith : what we have loved,
Others will love, and we will teach them how ;
Instruct them how the mind of man becomes
A thousand times more beautiful than the earth
On which he dwells, above this frame of things
In beauty exalted, as it is itself
Of quality and fabric more divine. 50

NOTES

Book I. p. 1, l. 3. **Much favoured in my birthplace.** Wordsworth was born at Cockermouth, a small town in Cumberland, commanding a view of the Lake mountains.

P. 1, l. 4. **In that belovéd Vale.** The valley of Esthwaite. Wordsworth is alluding to his life at the Grammar School, Hawkshead.

P. 1, l. 10. **springes** : traps. Cf. *Hamlet*, Act I. sc. iii., "Ay, springes to catch woodcocks."

P. 3, l. 77. **When, from behind that craggy steep, etc.** As the boat receded, the sky-line widened, and a peak which the boy had either forgotten or never known made its formidable appearance. Wordsworth frequently refers to fear as one of the emotions which Nature awakens in a healthy imagination : cf. "Fostered alike by beauty and by fear." The poem *Peter Bell* tells how a drunken hawker was terrified into seeing that the world is not a mere 'world of death.'

P. 5, l. 133. **shod with steel.** Here and elsewhere, e.g. in his description of the game of 'noughts and crosses' (p. 7, ll. 209-214) Wordsworth falls back upon the artificial diction which he condemned. His avowed principle was to use a "selection of the real language of men." Much of his best poetry is written in a style which is direct yet often noble. In his unsuccessful passages his language is either too artificial or too 'natural' ; that is, a copy of the "real language of men," without the necessary selection.

P. 8, l. 239. **Esthwaite's splitting fields of ice.** Esthwaite is a shallow lake, and easily freezes.

P. 9, l. 16. **a third small Island, etc.** : St. Mary's, or Ladye's Holme, north of Bowness.

P. 9, l. 31. **The self-sufficing power of Solitude.** The love of Solitude is one of Nature's gifts to the poet. Cf. ll. 354 and seqq. :

When from our better selves we have too long
Been parted by the hurrying world . . . ;
also the Sonnet :

The world is too much with us, late and soon
Getting and spending we lay waste our powers, . . .

P. 9, ll. 5, 6. **in the nave Of the old church.** The Priory Church, Cartmel. Cartmel is a town on the tongue of land which lies between the estuaries of the Kent and the Leven. The ground is flat; but the hills begin to rise about three miles inland. The mouth of the Leven is fordable at low tide, and Wordsworth describes elsewhere a memorable occasion on which he crossed it. (Book x. ll. 553 and seqq.; pp. 70, 71.)

P. 11, ll. 52, 53. **O Nature ! Thou hast fed My lofty speculations,** etc.: cf. what Wordsworth says of Nature in various passages of the *Lines Written above Tintern Abbey*, e.g.

Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her.

P. 12, l. 1. **It was a dreary morning**, etc.: some morning in the autumn of 1787.

P. 13, l. 17. **And at the Hoop alighted, famous Inn.** "When Wordsworth, having to narrate a very plain matter, tries *not* to sink in narrating it, tries, in short, to be what is falsely called poetical, he does sink, although he sinks by being pompous, not by being low.

Onward we drove beneath the Castle; caught,
While crossing Magdalene bridge, a glimpse of Cam,
And at the Hoop alighted, famous Inn.

That last line shows excellently how a poet may sink with his subject by resolving not to sink with it. A page or two farther on, the subject rises to grandeur, and then Wordsworth is nobly worthy of it:—

The antechapel, where the statue stood
Of Newton with his prism and silent face,
The marble index of a mind for ever
Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone."

—M. Arnold, *On Translating Homer*.

P. 16, l. 52. **with wearisome Cassandra voice.** It was the fate of Cassandra to utter true prophecies and warnings which no one heeded.

P. 17, l. 5. **When, in forlorn and naked chambers cooped,** etc. For a picture of a life devoted to scholarship during the Renaissance, in the manner described here, see *The Grammian's Funeral* (Browning).

P. 18, l. 28. **obolus** : a Greek penny. A similar story is told by Gibbon, though he expresses doubt of its truth, of the old age of Justinian's famous general, Belisarius, who is said to have begged by the wayside, " Give an obolus to Belisarius the general " (Gibbon, ch. 43).

P. 18, l. 31. **Bucer, Erasmus, or Melanchthon**, famous scholars of the Renaissance; their dates were 1491-1551, 1466-1536, 1497-1560, respectively.

P. 19, l. 47. **Of manners put to school**, i.e. of formal manners. 'Put' is a past participle in agreement with 'manners.'

P. 20, l. 60. **And unaimed prattle flying up and down**. This night of festivity was spent "in one of the small mountain farm-houses near Hawkshead" (Knight).

P. 21, l. 20. **Winander** : Windermere.

P. 21, ll. 30, 31. **to join the brook That murmured in the vale**. "The 'brook' is Sawrey beck, and the 'long ascent' is the second of the two, in crossing from Windermere to Hawkshead, and going over the ridge between the two Sawreys. It is only at that point that a brook can be heard 'murmuring in the vale'" (Knight).

P. 25, l. 26. **Might almost "weep to have," etc.** A quotation from Shakespeare, Sonnet lxiv. :

This thought is as a death, which cannot choose
But weep to have that which it fears to lose.

P. 26, ll. 60, 61. **The famous history of the errant knight Recorded by Cervantes, "Don Quixote."**

P. 28, ll. 153 and seqq. **Enow there are on earth to take in charge**, etc. Many of the anti-clerical writers of the eighteenth century had attacked monastic life because it contributed little or nothing to social well-being. On the whole, the charge was justified, as the religious orders of the time were mostly decadent. But Wordsworth considered that in the highest human interests, certain men should be released from the ordinary cares of life and devote themselves to a life of contemplation. Cf. his lines on the monks of the Chartreuse, who

"so long
Had bodied forth the ghostliness of things
In silence visible and perpetual calm,"

p. 45, ll. 106 and seqq.

P. 30, ll. 198 and seqq. **in memory of all books which lay Their sure foundations in the heart of man, etc.** "At Hawkshead (Wordsworth) read English literature, learned Latin and Mathematics, and wrote both

English and Latin verse. . . . Though he was taught both languages and mathematics he was left as free to range the 'happy pastures' of literature, as to range the Hawkshead woods on autumn nights in pursuit of woodcocks. . . . In his *Autobiographical Memoranda* Wordsworth says, 'Of my earliest days at school I have little to say, but that they were very happy ones, chiefly because I was left at liberty, then and in the vacations, to read whatever books I liked. For example, I read all Fielding's works, Don Quixote, Gil Blas, and any part of Swift that I liked; Gulliver's Travels and the Tale of the Tub being both much to my taste'" (Knight).

P. 31, ll. 256, 7. **Early died My honoured Mother.** In 1778, the poet's eighth year.

P. 32, ll. 294, 5. **that common sense May try this modern system by its fruits, etc.** A protest against the influence of the doctrinaire on education. The eighteenth century produced numerous theoretical writers on the subject, many of whom claimed that their proposed reforms were founded on Nature (e.g. Thomas Day, author of *Sandford and Merton*). Wordsworth has no fault to find with the ancient systems, provided they leave the child plenty of freedom. On the contrary, he fears that the methods founded on 'Nature' may, by their excessive interference, produce very unnatural children.

P. 33, l. 307. **And natural or supernatural fear, etc.** Cf. the note to p. 3, l. 77.

P. 34, ll. 341, 2. **the wishing-cap Of Fortunatus.** A miraculous cap, by means of which any three wishes of the wearer were fulfilled. Cf. Dekker's *Old Fortunatus*.

P. 34, l. 344. **Sabra in the forest with St. George.** In the old folk-play St. George, the patron-saint of England, describes himself as one

Who fought the dragon and brought him to slaughter,
And won fair Sabra thus, the king of Egypt's daughter.

P. 35, l. 400. **The thronèd Lady whom erewhile we hailed:** Hawkshead Church, already described in *The Prelude*, Bk. iv., in a passage not in these selections.

P. 38, ll. 496-503. **The tales that charm away the wakeful night, etc.** Wordsworth here alludes to various types of 'romantic' literature which had, at different periods since the Renaissance, enjoyed a considerable vogue in spite of the prevailing 'classical' standards. **Legends penned, etc.:** mediaeval stories such as the

Lives of the Saints. The **Fictions** and the **adventures endless** : probably both belong to the order of romances of which Sydney's *Arcadia* is an example. Some of these works were excessively long.

P. 39, ll. 510-533. Cf. the *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*.

P. 40, l. 563. **By the still borders of the misty lake** : Esthwaite. The identity of the friend to whom the poet refers can only be guessed at.

P. 42, l. 1. **the third summer**, etc. : the summer of 1790.

P. 42, l. 2. **A youthful friend.** Robert Jones, of Plas-yn-llan, Denbighshire.

P. 42, ll. 24, 5. **on the very eve Of that great federal day.** The day before July 14th, 1790. The Bastille fell on July 14th, 1789 ; and exactly a year afterwards Louis XVI. swore fidelity to the new constitution, in the presence of a vast assembly drawn from all parts of France.

P. 43, l. 28. **Southward thence**, etc. They walked as far as Châlons, and thence sailed to Lyons.

P. 45, l. 104. **riotous men commissioned to expel**, etc. Not strictly correct. They were only on a 'domiciliary visit.'

P. 45, l. 115. **St. Bruno's pines.** The forest of Bruno, near the Chartreuse (Knight).

P. 45, l. 118. **the sister streams of Life and Death** : "Names of rivers at the Chartreuse" (Wordsworth).

P. 46, l. 159. **Vallombre's groves** : "One of the valleys of the Chartreuse" (Wordsworth).

P. 46, l. 163. **The cross of Jesus stand erect**, etc. : "Alluding to crosses seen on the top of the Spiry Rocks of the Chartreuse, which have the appearance of being inaccessible" (Wordsworth).

P. 47, ll. 1-5. **From a bare ridge . . . never more could be.** For a different expression of the same idea see Wordsworth's poem, *Yarrow Unvisited*.

P. 49, ll. 82-101. **brook and road. . . . Of first, and last, and midst and without end.** These lines are often printed as a separate poem. Dr. A. C. Bradley describes them as "some of the greatest lines in English poetry."

P. 50, l. 14. **Vauxhall and Ranelagh.** There were tea-gardens at these places in Wordsworth's time.

P. 51, l. 25. **Bedlam, and those carved maniacs at the gates**, etc.

The Bedlam or Bethlehem hospital for lunatics to which Wordsworth refers was demolished in 1814.

P. 51, l. 33. **addressed**: prepared.

P. 52, l. 59. **Robert Boyle** (1627-1691), a natural philosopher, one of Bacon's early disciples.

P. 52, l. 67. **raree-show** : "a show carried about in a box" (*Concise Oxford Dictionary*).

P. 57, l. 59. **like an aerial cross**, etc. Cf. note to p. 46, l. 163.

P. 58, l. 5. **To meet the war upon her frontier bounds**. War broke out between France and "the King of Hungary and Bohemia," i.e. the Emperor, Francis II., in April 1792.

P. 58, l. 27. **Among that band of Officers was one**, etc. This was General Michel Beaupuy, the man who, after Coleridge, probably had more influence on Wordsworth than anyone else. He was at this time about thirty-seven years of age. Wordsworth's enthusiasm for political speculation seems to have been derived in part from his conversations with Beaupuy. A biography of Beaupuy has been written by G. Bussière and E. Legouis. He fought in the wars of La Vendée, surviving the wounds he received there (Wordsworth is wrong on p. 61, ll. 113, 114), but was killed in the battle on the Elz, Oct. 19th, 1796.

P. 60, l. 98. **Dion**. See Wordsworth's poem of this title.

P. 60, ll. 99-106. **a Deliverer's glorious task**, etc. Dion, a disciple of Plato, delivered the town of Syracuse from the tyranny of Dionysius. He established a dictatorship, and was helped in the task of government by the philosophers Eudemus and Timonides.

P. 62, ll. 11, 12. **From his throne the King had fallen** : as a result of the events of Aug. 10th, 1792 (see note to p. 63, ll. 8, 9). He was guillotined in Jan. 1793.

P. 63, l. 16. **Had burst innocuous**. The "invading host" was checked at Valmy on Sept. 20th, 1792. Valmy is sometimes regarded as one of the decisive battles of the world.

P. 63, ll. 8, 9. **I crossed the square.... Of the Carrousel**. On Aug. 10th, 1792, an insurrectionary force, drawn partly from the provinces and partly from the poorer quarters of Paris, entered the precincts of the Tuileries by the Place du Carrousel and began an attack on the palace. Their object was the destruction of the monarchy. Large numbers of the insurgents were killed before the palace was forced.

P. 64, l. 26. **I thought of those September massacres.** Murders of priests and other 'suspected' persons. The 'massacres' were organised principally by Marat, and lasted from Sept. 3rd to Sept. 6th, 1792.

P. 64, l. 40. "**Sleep no more.**" A reminiscence of *Macbeth*, Act II., sc. ii. :

Methought I heard a voice cry *Sleep no more!*
Macbeth doth murder sleep, etc.

P. 65, ll. 1, 2. **Twice had the trees let fall Their leaves,** etc. Wordsworth returned to England in December 1792.

P. 65, ll. 9, 10. **It pleased me more To abide in the great City.** He stayed in London until the spring of 1793.

P. 65, l. 12. **that first memorable onset.** The movement for the abolition of slavery led by Clarkson and Wilberforce.

P. 66, l. 51. **When Englishmen by thousands were o'erthrown.** After suffering serious reverses in the early months of 1793, France ordered a 'levée en masse' and threw herself with irresistible energy on her enemies. The tide of fortune began to turn. Toulon was captured from the British; the royalists of La Vendée were crushed; the Austrians, Prussians, Spanish and Portuguese all suffered defeat.

P. 67, l. 1. **Domestic carnage now filled the whole year.** The Reign of Terror may be said to have begun with the Loi des Suspects (Sept. 1793), which gave almost unlimited power of life and death to the Revolutionary Tribunal. The 'grande terreur,' during which 1376 persons were guillotined in Paris alone, coincided with the dictatorship of Robespierre, i.e. June 10th to July 27th, 1794.

P. 67, l. 26. **The illustrious wife of Roland,** etc. Madame Roland was guillotined on Nov. 8th, 1793. On her way to execution, she exclaimed, in words which have since become famous, "O Liberty, what things are done in thy name!"

P. 68, l. 36. **The Herculean Commonwealth had put forth her arms,** etc. See note to p. 66, l. 51.

P. 68, l. 2. **the downfall of this Tribe :** i.e. of Robespierre and his supporters, St. Just, Couthon, Lebas, Robespierre the younger, and about seventeen others (in July 1794).

P. 69, ll. 4, 5. **Over the smooth sands Of Leven's ample estuary,** etc. The River Leven drains Lake Windermere and enters the sea a few miles N.E. of Ulverston. The view embraces many of the principal mountains of the Lake Country.

P. 69, l. 24. An honoured teacher of my youth. The Rev. William Taylor, master of Hawkshead Grammar School from 1782 to 1786.

P. 71, l. 93. We beat with thundering hoofs the level sand. A repetition of p. 10, l. 23. They rode "by Arrad Foot and Greenodd, beyond Ulverston, on the way to Hawkshead" (Knight).

P. 72, l. 9. When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights, etc. In the eyes of many men who played an important part in the Revolution, one of the most serious charges to be brought against the institutions of the Ancien Régime was the apparent neglect of Reason. Voltaire and other writers appealed to the logical minds of Frenchmen by pointing out the anomalies of the old system. At one stage of the Revolution an attempt was made to associate the religious feelings of the people with abstractions such as Reason and Nature. On Nov. 10th, 1793, a licentious ceremony was held in Notre Dame, called the 'Feast of Liberty and Reason.'

P. 74, l. 103. Frenchmen had changed a war of self-defence, etc. The Republic of Venice was suppressed in 1797, and the Swiss Cantons were subjugated in 1798.

P. 75, ll. 119, 120. all things tending fast To deprivation : tending to ruin and destruction.

P. 75, ll. 137, 8. to the blind restraints of general laws Superior, etc. Principle and the teaching of experience are swept away, and no guide is accepted beyond the expediency of the moment.

P. 80, l. 38. the loved one at my side. His sister Dorothy.

P. 80, ll. 52, 3. thou must give Else never canst receive. Cf. Coleridge :

We receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live.

—*Desjection, an Ode.*

P. 81, l. 63. One Christmas time, etc : 1783.

P. 86, ll. 15, 6. among the wilds Of Sarum's plain, my youthful spirit was raised, etc. In the summer of 1793 Wordsworth spent a few days on Salisbury plain with his friend Calvert.

P. 88, ll. 1-5. It was a close, warm, breezeless summer night. Wordsworth with his friend, Robert Jones, and their guide set out on this expedition from Beddgelert, a low-lying village in N. Wales, from which the ascent of Snowdon may easily be made. The year was 1793.

P. 94, l. 103. **Child of my parents ! Sister of my soul ! etc.** One of the most memorable of the many tributes of love and gratitude paid by Wordsworth to his sister.

P. 94, ll. 117, 8. **Thou didst soften down This over-sternness.** For instances of Dorothy Wordsworth's genius for minute and delicate observation, see her *Journal*, especially the parts written at Grasmere.

P. 96, l. 8. **That summer, under whose indulgent skies,** etc. An allusion to the summer of 1798, when Wordsworth and Coleridge went for a walking tour in the region of the Quantock Hills and composed several of the poems included in the *Lyrical Ballads*.

P. 96, ll. 17, 18. **Murmuring of him who, joyous hap, was found,**
After the perils of his moonlight ride. An allusion to Wordsworth's poem, *The Idiot Boy*, first published in *Lyrical Ballads*.

P. 96, l. 20. **In misery near the miserable Thorn.** See *The Thorn*, also included in *Lyrical Ballads*.

P. 97, l. 33. **Though man return to servitude,** etc. Wordsworth is probably thinking of Napoleon's coronation as Emperor in 1804.

QUESTIONS

1. In what respects were Wordsworth's school-days favourable to his poetic career ?
2. Describe the adventure on the lake, when "a huge peak" appeared unexpectedly on the sky-line.
3. What did Wordsworth gain at Cambridge ?
4. My heart was full ; I made no vows, but vows
Were then made for me ; bond unknown to me
Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
A dedicated Spirit.

These lines conclude the description of a memorable experience. Explain carefully what that experience was.

5. Describe Wordsworth's dream about the Arab. What is the significance of this dream ?
6. How does Wordsworth criticise the system of education which aims at producing "a miracle of scientific lore" ?
7. What were Wordsworth's views about the French Revolution during his first visit to the Continent ?
8. Describe in your own language what Wordsworth saw during his journey over the Alps.
9. Describe the London of Wordsworth's days.
10. Who was Michel Beaupuy ? What did Wordsworth admire in him ?
11. The place, all hushed and silent as it was,
Appeared unfit for the repose of night,
Defenceless as a wood where tigers roam.

What place does Wordsworth allude to ? Why does he describe it in this manner ?

12. Explain the following lines :

I only, like an uninvited guest
Whom no one owned, sate silent, shall I add,
Fed on the day of vengeance yet to come.

13. What sights were to be seen, and what incident took place

as Wordsworth crossed "the smooth sands Of Leven's ample estuary"?

14. Why was Wordsworth so deeply troubled by the course of the French Revolution?

15. "The single sheep, and the one blasted tree." Give in your own words the rest of the description of which this line is a part. Why does Wordsworth remember the scene so vividly?

16. What does Wordsworth say about his sister, and about Coleridge, in these Selections?

17. Explain carefully the force of the epithets in:—"an *elfin* pinnace" (p. 3), "*undetermined* sense" (p. 3), "*forlorn* cascades" (p. 6), "*ironic* diamonds" (p. 7), "*insinuated* scoff" (p. 12), "*specious* cowardice" (p. 22).

SUBJECTS FOR ESSAYS

1. How does Wordsworth resemble Milton as a man and as a poet ?
2. How does the style of *The Prelude* differ from the style of Wordsworth's early narrative poems, e.g. *The Idiot Boy* ?
3. The influence of the French Revolution on English Poetry, with special reference to Wordsworth and Coleridge.
4. Wordsworth's patriotism.
5. What part did Nature play in Wordsworth's "restoration," after the disappointment caused by the Revolution ?
6. Wordsworth as a humanist.
7. Does Wordsworth idealise rustic life ?
8. Hazlitt said : "There is little mention of mountainous scenery in Mr. Wordsworth's poetry ; but by internal evidence one might be almost sure that it was written in a mountainous country, from its bareness, its simplicity, its loftiness and its depth." Can you justify these remarks ?

HELPS TO FURTHER STUDY

1. De Quincey's *Reminiscences of the Lake Poets*. Interesting and picturesque, but not accurate in all its details.
2. Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, Chapters xiv.-xxii.
3. Dorothy Wordsworth's *Journals*.
4. Matthew Arnold's Essay, in *Essays in Criticism* (second series). This Essay is the Preface to Arnold's Selections from Wordsworth's Poetry (Golden Treasury Series). To understand fully Arnold's views on Wordsworth one should also read the beautiful *Memorial Verses*.
5. F. W. H. Myers's *Wordsworth* in the "English Men of Letters" Series. A sympathetic account of Wordsworth's life and work, by an admirer who was himself a poet.
6. Walter Pater's *Wordsworth* in *Appreciations*. Suggestive and scholarly.
7. Sir Walter Raleigh's *Wordsworth*. A brilliant essay on the poet as man and artist.
8. Dr. A. C. Bradley's Lecture "Wordsworth," in *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*. Dr. Bradley's purpose is to supplement and correct "the notions of (Wordsworth's) poetry prevalent among general readers."
9. Professor Emile Legouis's *La Jeunesse de Wordsworth*. A translation of this very sympathetic work is published by Messrs. Dent under the title of *The Early Life of Wordsworth*.
10. Professor G. M. Harper's *William Wordsworth, His Life, Work and Influence* (2 vols.). Prof. Harper is an American scholar. His book is the fullest work on Wordsworth's life.

